UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
12th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 23 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 102: INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 158: QUESTION OF THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (continued)*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.12
16 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-81590 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/208-S/1996/543, A/51/327, A/51/357 and A/51/450; A/C.3/51/L.2 and L.3)

AGENDA ITEM 102: INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/68, 87, 93, A/51/129-E/1996/53, A/51/208-S/1996/543, A/51/295, 375, 436, 437 and 469)

AGENDA ITEM 158: QUESTION OF THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (continued) (A/C.3/51/7)

1. Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakstan), referring to agenda item 102, and speaking also on behalf of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, called for combined efforts by the international community to put an end to illegal drug trafficking, as one of the main areas of work of the United Nations. She supported concentrating the efforts of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) on the most urgent areas and supported the proposed special session of the General Assembly on international drug control. The work of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board was also commendable. She called for the speedy implementation of the Board's proposals on measures to counter money laundering and fully supported the position of those two bodies on the inadmissibility of legalizing the non-medical use of narcotic drugs, which would undermine the international drug-control system. The firm position of the main United Nations anti-drug bodies on the negative consequences of legalizing narcotic drugs must not change.

2. The countries on whose behalf she was speaking urged greater use of the Organization's potential in exchanging information on experience gained in anti-drug cooperation and establishing close contacts among the regional organizations. Those countries were carrying out active measures to strengthen anti-drug cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States on a multilateral and bilateral basis. Illegal drug trafficking was on the rise in many States of the former Soviet Union. The seriousness of that problem and the spread of drug addiction and crime made it necessary to strengthen practical cooperation on the part of the competent authorities of the countries concerned. An agreement on cooperation among the Commonwealth member States in combating drug trafficking had been in effect since 1992, and joint measures were being drawn up to counter that scourge.

3. The Commonwealth office for combating organized crime was also active in the area of drug control, and a common databank on drug-related crimes and their perpetrators was being established. The countries on whose behalf she was speaking hoped to receive assistance from UNDCP in implementing specific technical-aid projects and looked forward to continuing their fruitful cooperation with the United Nations in that field.

4. Mr. Pe Thein TIN (Myanmar) said his Government pursued a drug-control strategy based on drug eradication and prevention and the elimination of poppy

cultivation through a comprehensive social and economic development programme. For over a century, the livelihood of the national races inhabiting the border areas of Myanmar had been poppy cultivation. His Government had devcted special attention to improving the infrastructure and living conditions in those areas. In 1992, a new ministry had been established in order to implement various development projects. A master plan had been drawn up in order to alleviate poverty, eradicate poppy cultivation, develop the economic and social infrastructure of the area, preserve the culture and customs of the national races, establish alternative economic enterprises and maintain security.

5. The development projects and resulting improvement in living conditions in those regions would contribute to international efforts to combat the drug menace. The measures taken had already yielded results. Numerous armed groups had laid down their arms in order to participate in development projects; and poppy cultivation and drug trafficking in certain areas along the border between Myanmar and Thailand had been eradicated.

6. His Government sought to cooperate more closely with UNDCP and neighbouring countries and was actively participating in the international campaign against illicit drug production and trafficking. Myanmar was unwavering in its commitment to eliminate poppy cultivation and drug trafficking and was ready to cooperate fully with its neighbours and UNDCP in that regard.

7. Mrs. EL KABBAJ (Morocco) said that international cooperation in the field of drug control should focus on demand-reduction measures and alternative-development programmes to tackle the root causes of drug trafficking and addiction. A collective sense of responsibility on the part of all countries, both producer and consumer countries, was required in order to establish effective international cooperation in the anti-drug effort. Worldwide measures were necessary in order to eliminate the threat posed by money laundering to financial markets, economic systems and the stability of States. She hoped that the proposed special session of the General Assembly in 1998 on international drug control would make it possible to strengthen international cooperation and bolster financial support for alternative-development programmes.

8. Morocco, which was determined to carry out its international commitments under drug-control conventions, was implementing an anti-drug strategy based on supply reduction, measures to combat illicit drug trafficking, and increased international cooperation. In 1996, her country had launched an intensive anti-drug operation which had led to the dismantling of drug-trafficking networks, the prosecution of drug traffickers and the seizure of drugs.

9. Her Government had drafted a law based on the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and resolutions of the General Assembly and international organizations on money laundering. It had also undertaken socio-economic programmes in cooperation with the European Union. She hoped that those measures would be supported by the appropriate United Nations bodies and that resolute cooperation could be established with Morocco's partners in the criminal-investigation and economic fields. She commended the efforts of UNDCP to mobilize resources, and expressed the hope that donor countries and international financial institutions would

provide speedy assistance to countries in their efforts to eradicate the scourge of drugs.

10. Mr. AMIRKHIZI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Global Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its seventeenth special session must be fully implemented by Member States in order for real progress to be made in combating the drug problem. The Programme provided a model framework for individual countries and a foundation for further cooperation. The Islamic Republic of Iran nad been cooperating with its neighbours through the regional Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and bilateral agreements. The technical assistance and support provided by UNDCP for the activities of ECO were greatly appreciated.

11. His Government recognized the importance of a balanced approach involving the reduction of both supply and demand. His delegation did not believe that decriminalization of non-medical drug use was compatible with the international drug conventions, since that would contradict the measures taken by countries to control illicit trafficking. It could also lead to an expansion in drug abuse, with extensive harm to public health. Supply reduction and the suppression of illicit trafficking constituted a cornerstone of the country's drug policy.

12. His delegation supported the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998, as it would ensure the continuing commitment of Governments in their struggle against all aspects of illicit drugs. While expressing its full support for UNDCP, his delegation was greatly concerned by the attitude taken towards that body by some donor countries, and stressed that countries with a high level of domestic consumption of illicit drugs should continue to bear a fair share of the increasing financial burden of UNDCP.

13. The role of transit countries in controlling the flow of drugs deserved fresh global consideration. Drug traffickers were using Iranian territory as the shortest land route to Europe, and as a consequence, his country had had to commit huge resources in dealing with the problem over the last decade.

14. His delegation reaffirmed the vital role of the International Narcotics Control Board as the treaty body for international drug-control conventions, and was concerned about the increasing tendency of certain States to express biased views on the policies of other States. His delegation opposed the continued use of unilateral mechanisms of evaluation, qualification and certification, as inconsistent with the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention, and as undermining multilateral instruments and mechanisms. His country was determined to continue its battle against the drug menace, and extended its full support to UNDCP at national, regional and international levels.

15. Mr. SYCHOV (Belarus), referring to item 101, and speaking also on behalf of Georgia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, said that only joint international efforts could achieve results in combating the growing threat of organized crime. The measures taken by the United Nations to enhance practical cooperation among Member States in that field were of great importance, and must now be implemented consistently.

16. The countries on whose behalf he was speaking supported the decisions of the fifth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. They attached particular importance to its adoption of decisions by consensus, taking into account the interests of all regional groups, and were impressed by the attention focused on priority areas of concern. The United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security (A/C.3/51/L.3) and the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials (A/C.3/51/L.2), elaborated by the Commission and recommended for adoption by the General Assembly, were precisely in keeping with those considerations.

17. The Organization must continue to play a leading role in defining standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, determining the most urgent areas for consideration. The research carried out under United Nations auspices on measures to regulate the sale of firearms and prevent theft of and illegal trafficking in motor vehicles was also commendable.

18. The countries in question supported the proposals aimed at strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme. Expanding cooperation between the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and other United Nations bodies was important in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization's activities. United Nations crime-prevention efforts must be reinforced by increased cooperation at the regional level.

19. The countries on whose behalf he was speaking were currently updating their legislation on crime, corruption, money laundering and illegal drug trafficking. A convention on legal assistance and interdepartmental agreements on crime prevention, drug trafficking and the exchange of information had been concluded. Mechanisms for coordinating cooperation had been established; and an office to coordinate measures to combat organized crime and other dangerous forms of crime was operating.

20. In May 1996, the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States had adopted an intergovernmental programme of joint crime-prevention measures covering the period up to the year 2000. Provision had been made for more than 10 multilateral agreements among Commonwealth member States on such questions as terrorism, computer-related crimes and money laundering.

21. Mr. SERIWA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the demand for and traffic in drugs had reached alarming proportions in all parts of the world, despite the efforts of States and international organizations. Drug trafficking had become a threat to the peace of every country, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation should be strengthened in order to confront the menace. It was important to raise awareness of the dangers of drugs, particularly among young people. The family and society as a whole must become involved, and addicts must be rehabilitated. Alternative crops must be found, and measures must be taken to prevent the use of essential chemicals for manufacturing illicit drugs. All States should ratify the relevant international conventions, and effective national legislation was needed to deal with the perpetrators of drug-related crime. Consumer and producer countries should coordinate their activities, and all States should implement the Global Programme of Action.

22. His country appreciated the role played by UNDCP and supported the proposal to hold a special session of the General Assembly in 1998.

23. Illicit drugs were not a great social problem in his country, but it recognized their evil effects, and had therefore taken part in relevant international and regional conferences, and had signed bilateral agreements and international conventions. The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was observed every year in his country, and one week was set aside annually in order to raise awareness of the dangers of drugs. Legislation had recently been passed to punish drug traffickers.

24. Mr. MESSOBOT SEP (Cameroon) said that international drug control was one of the most serious challenges to be faced by the United Nations. In his country, the problem had reached alarming proportions and was still growing rapidly. Society was, however, little aware of the dangers involved and was ill-equipped to face them. Young people, encouraged to take drugs by traffickers, thought that drug abuse was a fashion which they could adopt and then abandon at will. Although appropriate legislation was in place, the Government suffered a severe lack of financial and material means to implement it, and there had not yet been time for adequate training of public servants.

25. His Government, having early perceived the global dimension of the problem, had become a party to the relevant conventions and had taken part in regional conferences and activities. On the national level, efforts had been focused since the 1960s on the fight against drug consumption, and drastic laws had been adopted. However, it was proving difficult to cope with the magnitude of the problem, especially when the country was going through an unprecedented economic crisis. Thanks to bilateral cooperation, training sessions were regularly organized on the fight against drug trafficking. The establishment in his country of a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre to serve the whole Central African subregion was being considered, as was the introduction of scholastic programmes on drug abuse and trafficking.

26. In common with other African countries, Cameroon was unable single-handed to face drug trafficking and consumption. He therefore appealed to the international community to assist in the implementation of a declaration and plan of action for drug control adopted under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

27. Mr. ROSNES (Norway) said that his delegation supported the statement made on behalf of the European Union on agenda items 101 and 102.

28. Concerning item 158, his delegation also supported the draft United Nations framework convention against organized crime submitted by Poland (A/C.3/51/7), which was being studied with interest by the competent Norwegian authorities. Organized crime represented a threat to the political structures, economic interests, and development and stability of States, which often lacked the knowledge and means to deal with that threat. His delegation firmly believed that the fight against organized transnational crime could only be effective through international cooperation. For several decades, the Nordic States had benefited from practical cooperation in that area, most recently through the

coordination of measures to stop the gang wars and criminal activities of certain motorcycle associations.

29. Mr. BAHARUDDIN (Indonesia) said that the activities of the United Nations were an essential part of the international community's efforts to deal with drug abuse. Considerable progress had been achieved. The Global Programme of Action incorporated measures aimed at both controlling supply and reducing demand. Nevertheless, greater effort was needed to translate international recognition of the drug problem into truly effective initiatives. In particular, the lack of resources available to UNDCP must be rectified. Those countries which declared their commitment to international action, and which had the necessary financial means, must work more actively with UNDCP. Although the developing countries strongly desired to cooperate with the Programme, many lacked the resources to do so. They should be given the technical support they needed. Indonesia supported the holding of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 on international drug control and, as a member of the preparatory body, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, looked forward to participating in the organization of the special session.

30. While drug abuse was not widespread in Indonesia, it had been identified as a transit country. His Government was tackling that problem through law enforcement and cooperation with the drug-control agencies of other countries. Indonesia would shortly ratify the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and had already ratified the 1961 and 1971 Conventions. His Government recognized the importance of prevention. In families, schools and religious institutions, young people were being taught the value of a healthy lifestyle. Those addicted to drugs received treatment and vocational training to facilitate their reintegration into society. A coordination body had been appointed to oversee efforts in the fight against drug abuse. Indonesia valued highly the role of non-governmental organizations and would shortly host in Jakarta a meeting of the International Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for the Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse.

31. Indonesia was aware of the global trends in drug abuse and was therefore determined to enhance its law-enforcement capability and to strengthen cooperation at the regional and international levels.

32. Mr. WLOSOWICZ (Poland) said that Poland, the first country in its region to institute political and economic transformations several years before, was currently confronted with the phenomenon of organized crime. During the transition some faulty regulations and legal loopholes had been inevitable, and they had been exploited for criminal activities. In compliance with international instruments, his Government had penalized money laundering and had reduced bank secrecy. On the operational level, police capabilities had been widened significantly in recent years. Poland had embarked upon cooperation with law-enforcement agencies of neighbouring countries and of the United States.

33. Poland supported the idea of strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme. He hoped that the current United

Nations financial crisis would not severely affect the activities of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division.

34. The draft United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security, co-sponsored by Poland, would entail a commitment by States to combat serious cross-border crimes, including terrorist crimes and trafficking in drugs and arms. His delegation attached particular importance to the provision to prevent criminals from finding a safe haven. Poland shared the view of other States that theft of motor vehicles should be reflected more fully in the programme of work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. In December 1996, Poland would host a United Nations European conference on that subject.

35. Introducing a draft resolution submitted by Poland under agenda item 158 and circulated informally, he expressed the belief that the text reflected the position of the majority of members of the Committee, and that it would be adopted by consensus. The text recognized a need for closer cooperation among States in combating organized transnational crime, bearing in mind the roles of the United Nations and regional organizations. Paragraph 2 requested the Commission to consider, as a matter of priority, the question of elaborating an international convention against organized transnational crime, taking into account views of Member States on the matter, with a view to finalizing its work on the question as soon as possible.

36. Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria) said that, as it formulated the blueprint for its activities on drug control and crime prevention in the next century, the United Nations must build on past achievements. Many useful suggestions had been made by other delegations with regard to the Organization's future work. He had noted with particular interest the draft declaration on demand reduction being elaborated by UNDCP, and the calls for increased solidarity among Member States in the fight against money laundering. The extent of drug abuse and crime was now such that no individual State could hope to tackle them alone. He was therefore concerned that efforts at the international level, under the auspices of the United Nations, were sometimes hindered by lack of resources. Additional financial means must be found, in particular, for UNDCP and for initiatives on organized transnational crime. In addition, system-wide coordination must be enhanced to ensure that existing programmes were implemented.

37. His delegation was sadly aware that the international media often portrayed Nigeria as a major drug-trafficking country. His Government recognized that criminal elements were engaged in such contemptible activities and had taken strong measures to deal with them. A national drug-control strategy had been formulated to ensure that the objectives of the Global Programme of Action were translated into practical initiatives. There was a strong emphasis on demand reduction and primary prevention. Preventive drug education would shortly be introduced into primary and secondary schools. The national drug law enforcement agency was cooperating with its counterparts in other countries to prevent the use of couriers to transfer illicit drugs. Sizeable seizures had already been made. While his Government did not seek praise for its efforts, it would appreciate the support of the international community.

38. Enhanced international cooperation was necessary in order to implement the Naples Political Declaration and the Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime. States should take immediate action on the recommendations regarding the trafficking of women and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. His delegation hoped that the proposal to elaborate an international instrument on organized transnational crime would win universal support. The Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division, recently upgraded, must be given the additional resources it required to carry out its new responsibilities.

39. Mr. HABONIMANA (Burundi) said that the Governments of the African States were deeply concerned at the exacerbation of the problem of drug abuse in the region, especially among young people. The Council of Ministers of OAU had recently adopted a plan of action for drug control and had called upon member States to create national focal points to coordinate the activities of the relevant governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. In addition, UNDCP had been invited to strengthen its cooperation with OAU and to assist with the creation within the OAU secretariat of a mechanism to oversee implementation of the new plan of action. His delegation called upon the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to mobilize support from the various donors and relevant international bodies to enable developing countries to pursue more effectively the fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking. The African countries in particular would benefit from such assistance.

40. Reviewing the disastrous consequences of drug abuse, both for addicts themselves and for society, he stressed that even peace and security were threatened.

41. The transitional government in Burundi had adopted an ambitious programme aimed at inculcating positive values in young people to prevent them from slipping into drug addiction and delinquency. In addition, the programme was intended to promote development associations, such as cooperatives, in order to generate employment and provide training for youth. Implementation was being hampered, however, by the sanctions unjustly imposed on Burundi by its neighbours. Schools had been closed for several months because of the lack of supplies. He appealed to the international community to convince the countries responsible of the necessity of lifting the embargo. Such a decision would facilitate the ongoing negotiations with the rebels and would hasten the return to normality of life in Burundi.

42. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme) welcomed the open and frank debate which had taken place, showing a new vitality in the Committee. It was a good omen for the preparation of the proposed special session of the General Assembly. A common language was emerging, which was more harmonious than in previous years and conducive to a shared understanding of the problems under consideration. He hoped that it would lead to a common perception of the levels of priority to be given to different issues and to the adoption of a consistent and coherent position on the part of Governments in the different forums within the United Nations system and regional organizations, extending to financial matters and priority for action. He was also encouraged by signs of a new awareness of the importance of involving civil society. Initiatives should be taken in as many countries as

possible to establish task forces and national committees for the involvement of non-governmental organizations.

43. Mr. PAPIAN (Armenia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in reference to an earlier statement by the representative of Azerbaijan, said that the characterization of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict as being between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and references to "Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan" were misleading. The conflict was between the people of Nagorny Karabakh, who were striving for self-determination, and the Government of Azerbaijan, which refused to address their rights. The Armenian population of Nagorny Karabakh was seeking to avoid mass deportation and genocide. Since the eruption of the armed conflict, Armenia had consistently advocated its peaceful resolution through a negotiated settlement, and had made a constructive contribution to the peace process.

44. As to the references by unnamed media sources to Nagorny Karabakh as a so-called centre for the illegal production and shipment of drugs to European countries, with dozens of hectares devoted to poppies and hemp, it was difficult to respond, since Armenia had no official position on nonsense. He could only surmise that the author of that part of the Azerbaijani statement must himself have been under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.

45. Mr. PASHAYEV (Azerbaijan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Third Committee was not an appropriate forum for the discussion of political questions. Attempts were currently being made to resolve the problem of Armenian aggression in Nagorny Karabakh under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Each country was entitled, however, to set out the difficulties it faced in dealing with the problem of illicit drugs. His delegation had stated that the occupation of some 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan had created a power vacuum which certain elements had exploited by cultivating drugs and exporting them through Armenia. With regard to the claim that the earlier statement by the Azerbaijani delegation was the product of a sick mind, he would advise the representative of Armenia to exercise greater caution in his choice of words.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
13th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 24 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

later: Mr. KHAN (Pakistan)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.13
18 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-81608 (E)

/...

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, 90, 180, 210, 277 and Corr.1, 304, 309, 325 and 391)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (A/51/90, 210 and 322)

1. Ms. GREEN (Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues) said that, following the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the Secretary-General had designated her as his Special Adviser on Gender Issues, with the responsibility of chairing the Steering Committee on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat. The purpose was to ensure that the gender perspective was integrated into the policies and programmes of the United Nations system, and also to enable the Secretary-General to be in closer and more frequent contact with the Steering Committee.

2. The Secretary-General had firmly reiterated his commitment to gender equality in the United Nations, vigorously pursuing the idea of setting specific numerical targets culminating in total parity by the year 2000.

3. That goal now seemed more difficult to attain, owing in part to the current financial crisis. The Secretary-General was, however, determined to pursue the targets, and several special measures had been taken to comply with the commitments undertaken, and to ensure that women were not disproportionately affected by the crisis. The question of gender sensitization had acquired a new priority both at Headquarters and in the field. The Secretary-General was also promoting the establishment of a roster of highly-qualified women who could become his special representatives or heads of mission. More women were being hired in the field and had assumed responsibilities in areas covered by peace-related missions.

4. By taking a firm public stand on the standards that guided the work of the United Nations with regard to the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Secretary-General had assumed a leading role in restating the question of gender equality in a particularly delicate situation, making it clear that the United Nations system would continue to abide by internationally accepted legal instruments while respecting donor or recipient requirements which did not conflict with those principles. The United Nations had thus reaffirmed its commitment to human rights and to the underlying legal framework. It also stressed that women's rights were human rights.

5. The policy of incorporating more women in conditions of equality in the Secretariat was crucial in providing the United Nations with both the moral authority and the credibility it needed to promote the advancement of women throughout the world.

6. The Secretary-General's determination to comply with the mandate entrusted to him required the continuous support of the Member States. He would continue to look for ways to consolidate a working environment in the Secretariat where

women and men were given equal opportunities and incentives to develop their careers.

7. Mr. HALLIDAY (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) introduced the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304), submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 50/164.

8. The Secretariat had achieved one of the goals set by the General Assembly: the overall representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had stood at 35.2 per cent at the end of August 1996. That had been accomplished at a time of financial and budgetary constraints and an overall recruitment freeze. The Secretary-General had repeatedly reiterated his commitment to achieving gender equality in the Secretariat and that commitment had been actively pursued by the Focal Point for Women and the Office of Human Resources Management team. In January 1996, the Secretary-General had issued a bulletin to remind all senior managers to achieve gender equality in the United Nations, and an administrative instruction (ST/AI/412) had consolidated the special measures previously issued. The aim of those measures was to provide women with enhanced opportunities for promotion and placement until gender equality was achieved.

9. Two special measures had proven to be particularly effective. One allowed women who had served the Organization for at least one year under any type of appointment to be considered internal candidates and to apply as such for vacancies in the global United Nations Secretariat. The second, that of cumulative seniority, recognized the need to increase the pool of women eligible for promotion to policy- and decision-making levels.

10. The statistics contained in the report showed that real progress had been achieved for women at the junior Professional levels. Improvements were also being made in the middle ranks; however, there was still a need to create a critical mass of women staff at the P-4 and P-5 levels in order to form a pool of women candidates for senior posts. Three departments had already met the General Assembly's 50/50 gender goal. However, the General Assembly target of 25 per cent of women in the senior decision-making levels had not been achieved. As of 31 August 1996, the percentage of women at the D-1 level and above had been only 17.9 per cent. Greater efforts were needed to give well-qualified women access to the more senior posts.

11. While it was important to reach mandated targets, there must also be nurturing and mentoring for young entrants and for middle-level women staff already on board. That included building a work environment that was conducive to attracting the best and the brightest and retaining them. It was equally important to ensure that women were visible and participated in all areas of work of the United Nations.

12. Traditionally, there were certain areas such as languages, administration and support services where a higher representation of women was found; in the political areas, however, there were far fewer. It was not enough to look at numbers alone; women must be given opportunities for leadership, to chair meetings, lead missions and be involved in political negotiations.

13. Only when genuine equality was achieved in the global Secretariat could the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in United Nations activities be assured. Those criteria should also be taken into account in the Organization's work with consultants and contractors. Senior management must recognize that women brought a unique and special perspective to decision-making and policy-setting. Decisions and policies made without women's perspective would be lacking something essential. Work was under way to bring about a culture change which would include a better understanding of the mix of human resources available to the Organization and the importance of having all, men and women, contribute to their maximum potential.

14. The 300 most senior staff members, including heads of department, had been sensitized to gender and diversity issues in the United Nations workplace. More gender-sensitivity training was needed for all managers. However, the recruitment freeze had taken away one of the main tools for improving the percentage of women in the Professional category, especially at the most senior levels.

15. Policies were in place to provide a work environment that was receptive to the needs of all staff. However, in day-to-day management, limited funds and the need to balance priorities had meant that those policies had not been fully implemented. The working environment must be family oriented, and conditions of service must allow women in all categories to manage not only their working careers and personal growth, but also their family responsibilities.

16. The Office of Human Resources Management had been networking closely with colleagues in other agencies and programmes to learn from their experience. There were also plans to set up a regular dialogue with staff members, not only within the system but also in other regional, national and international organizations, who would discuss issues of mutual concern, exchange ideas, and provide each other with information on vacancies and names of potential women candidates for senior positions. A quarterly newsletter had recently been published for the first time, providing women within the United Nations with a forum for discussion and information on gender issues as well as details of administrative directives, vacancy announcements, and other matters of concern to women. The Office of the Focal Point for Women required reinforcement in order to monitor the implementation and progress of the strategic plan of action. Although General Assembly resolution 49/222 had urged Member States to make voluntary contributions to that end, none had so far been received.

17. There was a genuine desire to bring about gender parity in the Organization, but until that was achieved, efforts must be made to give the same weight to gender balance as to geographical representation. The responsibility for that lay with both the Organization and the Member States. It was necessary to compensate for past neglect. The downsizing of the Secretariat and tight constraints on recruitment made the task doubly difficult. With the approach of the next century, close cooperation was needed to bring to the Organization the full potential and creativity of women for the formulation and implementation of policies for the future.

18. Mrs. KING (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) said that the issues before the Committee were all about implementation of the agreements

reached at the Beijing Conference. The Assembly was now in a position to review the functioning of the three-tiered intergovernmental structure it had set in place the previous year, as well as implementation by the organizations of the United Nations system. It had before it the Secretary-General's report on implementing the outcome of the Conference (A/51/322).

19. The first tier of the intergovernmental structure consisted of the Commission on the Status of Women, which had adopted a long-term programme of work. The second tier was the Economic and Social Council, which was currently considering when it would take up the issue of the advancement of women at its high-level, coordination and operational segments. The third tier was the General Assembly.

20. The ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality had held its first meeting on the previous day. That Committee constituted a regular mechanism for consultation and collaboration on policies and programmes, and was intended to ensure mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system.

21. The Beijing Platform for Action assigned primary responsibility for implementation to Governments, which were proceeding, in consultation with non-governmental organizations, to implement their commitments. The General Assembly at its previous session had emphasized that Governments should develop comprehensive implementation strategies or plans of action no later than the end of 1996. The Commission had requested the Division for the Advancement of Women to prepare a synthesized report on implementation plans of Governments and the United Nations system. Pursuant to that request, the Division had so far received 19 national action plans from Governments. A subregional conference of governmental experts, held in Bucharest in September 1996, had recommended that a model national action plan should be used as a reference in developing specific plans in each country. Making those plans available to the Division would enable it to prepare an analysis for the 1998 session of the Commission.

22. A key aspect of addressing women's human rights was the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At their ninth meeting, the States parties to the Convention had recommended to the Assembly that it should approve that Committee's request for an additional session each year, as a temporary measure.

23. The critical area of violence against women was addressed in two reports: one on traffic in women and girls (A/51/309) and one on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325). The latter included the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group meeting held at Manila in May 1996.

24. At its 1997 session, the Commission would consider four areas: women in power and decision-making; women in the economy; women and the environment; and women and education and training.

25. The Beijing Conference had proved that the momentum generated by ideas could be a powerful force for change. The challenge to the international community was to maintain that momentum by its actions; it must keep its eyes on the prize, keep its faith in the outcome and do what needed to be done.

26. Ms. HEYZER (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women) said she was proud to report that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was involved in helping women in their quest for economic and political empowerment. In that climb to equality, women were well on their way to the summit and there was no turning back. The question was not whether they would reach the summit, but when.

27. One year after the Beijing Conference, significant advances had been made. The Platform for Action was serving as a strong foundation for women and their Governments to press forward and integrate gender issues into planning and practice.

28. In its work to facilitate implementation of the Platform for Action, UNIFEM was using five strategies: strengthening the capacity of women's organizations and networks to advocate for women; supporting innovative programmes and projects benefiting women; leveraging funds and support for innovative strategies dealing with critical issues affecting women; acting as a catalyst within the United Nations system and at the regional and national levels to advance women's empowerment; and documenting and disseminating best practices and lessons learned.

29. Current UNIFEM activities included helping to mobilize support for home-based workers in Asia; helping women in Latin America to start and run small businesses by guaranteeing loans made by local banks; training South African women in business and leadership skills using South-South peer training and identifying high-profit businesses; providing gender-sensitive workshops for male and female judges and police in several Latin American countries on issues related to family violence and violence against women; training in gender-sensitive development for parliamentarians in the Pacific Islands and other countries; promoting reforms in parts of Africa for the protection of refugee and internally-displaced women and training women in sustainable livelihoods and techniques; working with a national women's movement in Brazil to advocate changes in laws to implement agreements reached in Beijing; funding an initiative in Chile to draft a post-Beijing analysis of rural and indigenous women's needs; and supporting priority-setting and implementation activities between Governments, non-governmental organizations and donors in Kenya and in Jordan.

30. UNIFEM was helping more than 16 Governments to transform the Platform for Action into national action plans, and it was increasingly becoming a resource on women's empowerment within the United Nations system, acting as a gender adviser to the United Nations resident coordinator system, and chairing inter-agency task forces on gender and development in several countries. UNIFEM was also collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

31. From the grass-roots to the global Internet, from village councils to national Governments, from local banks to world trade, women were reaching new levels of participation and partnership with men. They were truly climbing to equality. Women faced many barriers in their fight to achieve economic and

political empowerment. With the support and encouragement of the international community, however, women would reach that summit of equality.

32. Mr. HOEY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and also Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had established a framework for the empowerment of women and for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes at the national, regional and international level. The commitments undertaken required strong political determination to ensure prompt and full implementation. Governments could not argue that religious or ethical values, cultural background or philosophical convictions prevented them from carrying out those commitments. The member States of the European Union reaffirmed their commitment to the Declaration and Platform for Action and called on Governments to develop comprehensive strategies to achieve equality between women and men and mainstream a gender perspective in all social, economic, civil, political and cultural fields. Governments should inform the international community and, in particular, the Division for the Advancement of Women about progress made.

33. In view of the important role played by non-governmental organizations, their participation in the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action was crucial. Governments should enhance the involvement of all actors in society in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference. Implementation of the Platform required a political commitment to make resources available at the national and international levels for the empowerment of women. The gender perspective must be integrated into budgetary decisions; and specific programmes ensuring equality between women and men must be adequately financed.

34. The European Union was contributing to the implementation of the Beijing commitments, inter alia, through a community action programme on equal opportunities for women and men. In October 1995, the Union had adopted a resolution aimed at promoting a realistic picture of the potential of women and men in society. A new directive guaranteed workers a minimum of three months' unpaid parental leave, distinct from maternity leave, when a child was born or adopted. The European Union was committed to integrating gender issues into development in order to change attitudes and structures at all levels and reduce gender inequalities in sharing power and in access to development opportunities. The Council of Ministers regularly reviewed the Union's implementation of the Beijing commitments.

35. The follow-up to the Beijing Conference on Women required an integrated approach to the advancement of women and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system. He welcomed the action taken by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council to implement General Assembly resolution 50/203 and commended the work in mainstreaming a gender perspective in poverty plans and strategies. The Commission should continue reviewing the Platform's priority areas of concern in its consideration of education, the training of women, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, and women and the environment.

36. The proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 should be the basis for action by the United Nations system in

implementing the outcome of the Beijing Conference. The European Union also underlined the need to review and assess in the year 2000 the progress achieved in implementing the Platform in an appropriate forum. The ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality should focus on the practical requirements of mainstreaming, monitor progress and coordinate implementation of the Platform for Action, and keep the Commission on the Status of Women informed of its work. Gender analysis based on reliable up-to-date data was an essential tool in understanding the full impact of policies. A gender perspective must be integrated into all aspects of the design and execution of programmes to combat poverty.

37. The Division for the Advancement of Women and other parts of the United Nations system should further develop the conceptual basis for the system-wide mainstreaming of a gender perspective as part of the preparations for the proposed discussion on mainstreaming at the 1997 session of the Economic and Social Council. In that regard, the input of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality would be of great value.

38. The Union stressed the importance of ensuring adequate financial resources for all United Nations policies and programmes in the system-wide follow-up to the Beijing Conference. In that regard, he welcomed the decision to approve an increase in the staffing level of the Division for the Advancement of Women to enable it to carry out all its tasks under the Platform for Action. It was hoped that the Division could be brought up to full strength as a matter of priority, in spite of financial constraints.

39. Under Article 8 of the Charter, women and men should be entitled to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in all United Nations organs. Full implementation of that provision was essential if the Organization was to retain its credibility and leadership role as an advocate for improving the status of women worldwide. While welcoming the progress made in filling professional posts with women, the overall figure concealed great variations among departments and offices. The proportion of women at policy- and decision-making levels was disappointing.

40. The European Union was concerned that the current financial constraints had had an adverse impact on the advancement of women in the Secretariat, both in terms of recruitment and promotion, and reaffirmed the need to meet the 50/50 target. The Union welcomed the steps being taken by the Secretary-General to mitigate the impact of current budgetary constraints and called on him to take the necessary measures to achieve the targets established. The European Union would welcome efforts to appoint women as special representatives and to fill other high-level positions as well as steps to involve women in vital areas of United Nations work, such as peacekeeping operations. Governments should try to appoint more women to represent them in the various United Nations bodies and should nominate more women as candidates for election to expert groups.

41. The European Union called on all States which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to bring about universal ratification by the year 2000. The Union continued to be concerned that a number of States had made reservations that were incompatible with the purpose of the Convention. Since

such reservations cast doubt on the commitment of the States concerned and undermined international law, those States should withdraw them as a matter of priority.

42. He welcomed the decision by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to amend its reporting guidelines and invite States parties to take into account the critical areas of concern in their reports. The Committee would thus perform a valuable monitoring function. Steps should be taken to improve the Committee's working methods to eliminate the backlog of reports for consideration. Enabling the Committee to meet for two three-week sessions annually would help significantly. He welcomed the ongoing work on the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention on the right of petition, and urged Member States to take an active part in the open-ended Working Group of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Union insisted that conference services should be made available to that end.

43. The European Union considered that the Third Committee should in future consider the issues of the advancement of women and the follow-up to the Beijing Conference under a single agenda item, and strongly favoured the adoption of a single resolution covering all aspects of the question.

44. Mrs. MORGAN (Mexico) said that her Government had established a national programme for women, 1995-2000, in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The programme sought to coordinate governmental action to promote the advancement of women and recognized the role to be played by non-governmental organizations. A coordination committee had been established for implementing the programme. All bodies of the executive branch had to draw up work plans for increasing the participation of women in development and ensuring complete equality with men. Strategies and guidelines were being established in various priority areas to implement a social policy with a gender perspective.

45. She noted with satisfaction the results of the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Following endorsement by the Economic and Social Council, the Commission's mandate had been strengthened and a multi-year programme had been established for following up the implementation of the Platform for Action. The United Nations should closely coordinate the activities of all its bodies and specialized agencies in order to achieve that objective. The efforts made to mainstream a gender perspective in each of the agencies had been significant. The establishment of inter-agency task forces for monitoring international conferences was an essential mechanism for attaining that goal.

46. She also reiterated her country's strong condemnation of violence against women migrant workers and trafficking in women and children, and underscored the need to eradicate them.

47. Mr. KASANDA (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for amending its reporting guidelines, which should enable the Committee to monitor the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed under the Convention. He urged States parties to support that important initiative by taking into account the critical areas of concern when

submitting reports to the Committee. SADC firmly supported that Committee's request for adequate meeting time in order to reduce its increasing backlog of reports by States parties. He noted with satisfaction the Economic and Social Council's decision to renew the mandate of the open-ended Working Group on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the right of petition.

48. The current financial crisis should not affect the advancement of women in the Secretariat; all efforts should still be made to achieve the 50-per-cent target of women in all posts. He agreed, however, with the view that the United Nations system could not do more than reflect the world community. Until women participated in sufficient numbers in all areas and in decision-making positions at the national level, the efforts of organizations to bring about a more equitable representation in their secretariats would not succeed. In that regard, the SADC member States expressed their concern that women from Africa were under-represented in the United Nations system.

49. Women throughout the world had made great strides in their advancement. In the past year, African women had made an important contribution in promoting peace in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Such examples showed that the time had come for the Secretary-General to appoint at least one woman as a special envoy in a United Nations peace initiative.

50. With regard to the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, he stressed the need for a practical, commonsense approach to mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes. An identifiable focal point was needed within the United nations system to coordinate gender issues. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action should have a high profile in order to maintain political interest and commitment and ensure accountability for performance. That was why the establishment of a special high-level post had been recommended. It was unfortunate that a different arrangement had been put in place. The SADC member States accepted that arrangement with very strong reservations and felt that the situation should be reviewed as soon as circumstances were favourable. The current arrangement was an inadequate response to the aspirations of the Beijing Conference.

51. SADC welcomed the establishment of the ACC Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. It was unclear whether the Inter-agency Committee would be serviced by the Division for the Advancement of Women. The tasks assigned to that Committee required adequate and stable servicing.

52. SADC looked forward to a comprehensive report on the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action by United Nations institutions. In the meantime, however, there was an urgent need to strengthen operational activities. There should be better coordination of policy formulation and implementation through programme delivery. Policies must be translated into concrete, achievable programmes. As part of that exercise, there should be a review of the reporting procedures of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which should submit a regular report to the Third Committee.

53. Immediately after the Beijing Conference, SADC had held a subregional meeting to initiate implementation of the Platform for Action. A subregional plan of action on women and development was currently being finalized. A decision had been made to use the SADC tribunal to consider violations of women's rights; and steps were being taken to incorporate the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into SADC instruments and protocols. He underscored the need to ensure the enjoyment of women's human rights; that included access to credit and ownership of land, and action to alleviate poverty among women and prevent violence against them.

54. Mrs. SUGIMORI (Japan) said that the Platform for Action could most effectively be implemented if policies developed by the Commission on the Status of Women and other intergovernmental bodies were transmitted to the operational organs of the United Nations system and other international organizations to be used as guidelines. A system-wide and integrated approach to mainstreaming a gender perspective within operational activities at all levels was also required. It was important to link policy-making intergovernmental bodies with funds and programmes, and her country therefore looked forward to effective coordination through the working group on operational activities.

55. Her country was pleased that UNIFEM had been able, with the help of the extraordinary contributions it had received from donors and the stringent budget it had introduced, to recover from the severe financial crisis that had beset it in 1995. She also welcomed the completion of the external evaluation of UNIFEM. Her Government supported all the activities of UNIFEM aimed at eliminating violence against women. Accordingly, it welcomed the establishment of the Trust Fund, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/166. Japan intended to contribute $1 million to it in 1996, and hoped that other countries would also contribute.

56. Her country had noted the decision of the Administrator of UNDP to increase the funds devoted to global and regional programmes targeting women, and to recruit gender advisers to oversee regional programmes. UNIFEM would have an important role to play in building the capacity of the UNDP focal point on gender. In its official development assistance, Japan gave high priority to women in development, and would pursue that initiative, prioritizing education, health, and economic and social participation. It also supported women in development-related projects through bilateral and multilateral channels. Her country had undertaken a number of measures designed to implement the Platform for Action, including the formulation of a new national plan of action, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/203.

57. Her country had made a commitment to build upon the partnership between men and women and between the Government and civil society. To that end it had hosted a meeting of senior officials from East and South-East Asian countries and, at the national level, had established a liaison conference for the promotion of gender equality as a channel for communication between the Government and the public. Local governments and non-governmental organizations had undertaken campaigns to raise public awareness and disseminate information on the Beijing Conference. Since 1957, the Government had included representatives of women's non-governmental organizations in its delegations to the General Assembly.

58. Ms. STOLTENBERG (Norway) said her delegation agreed with the strong wording used by the Secretary-General in his report on the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304). The crux of the issue was the added value of a more gender-balanced staff at all levels, since women added new insights and were an important and under-utilized resource. It was disappointing that the report suggested the setting of "more realistic targets", in other words, a downscaling of the proportion of women staff. If targets were hard to reach, the answer was to try even harder, using quotas if necessary. It was crucial to have women on all appointment committees, since their eye for relevant talent and experience differed from that of men. It was not clear why the financial crisis should make targets harder to reach, since the restructuring provided new opportunities and greater flexibility.

59. The problem of trafficking in and sexual exploitation of women and children was growing, and no longer mainly concerned exploited women from third-world countries. It had spread to large parts of Europe, where the victims tended to be women from the countries in transition, and where trafficking was to a large extent controlled by organized international crime syndicates. The Platform for Action had called for programmes such as those initiated by many European regional organizations in order to combat trafficking and to assist victims. Such programmes required international cooperation, and she welcomed the valuable work done at the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996.

60. Her delegation strongly supported efforts to strengthen the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The current situation was demoralizing, and unless changed, it would take six years for the Committee to examine the existing backlog of national reports, by which time they would be hopelessly out of date.

61. The Platform for Action had called for the mainstreaming of the human rights of women into the general human rights machinery of the United Nations, and that process should be accelerated. It would be advantageous to establish close links between the groups working in New York and Geneva, in order to avoid overlapping instruments and an unclear distribution of responsibility, and avoid giving the impression that all women's human rights issues belonged in that Committee. From a practical point of view, the scarce resources of all the three relevant bodies - the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on Human Rights - called for better coordination and use of their expertise.

62. Ms. PIERROT-BULTS (Netherlands) said that, since there was apparently no country in the world in which women's power or economic status equalled that of men, the United Nations could not be expected to work miracles. However, it was still duty-bound to do everything in its power to further gender equality inside and outside the Organization. It was of the utmost importance to women that the United Nations was able to fulfil all its responsibilities, but that was only possible if Member States paid their contributions. Member States should also demonstrate the importance they attached to gender equality by making available the resources to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

63. System-wide mainstreaming was a valuable instrument for raising awareness of gender perspectives and eradicating inequality in the United Nations system. The appointment of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues was a step forward. System-wide gender-specific knowledge was also increased by the work with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. Her delegation strongly recommended that the Special Rapporteur's mandate should be extended, since violence against women was such a widespread phenomenon that the subject should be integrated into the mandates of other special and thematic rapporteurs. Their activities should be well-coordinated to ensure that violence against women was combated across the board. Better coordination with regard to the integration of gender perspectives in all United Nations programmes would increase general efficiency and enhance programmes for the advancement of women. A strong, effective Commission on the Status of Women was needed to monitor and sustain that process.

64. Turning to the Commission's special themes for 1996 - poverty, women and the media, and child and dependant care - she said that education was the first priority if women were to achieve economic independence. Women should be involved at all levels and at all stages of the planning and implementation of programmes. Child labour also had a long-term impact by impeding eduction. Progress was being made in assessing gender-specific effects, but they needed to be systematically measured.

65. Although the victims of armed conflicts were often women and children, aid programmes were not gender specific, and ignored the particular problems faced by women, such as violence of all kinds, including sexual violence. Furthermore, high government expenditure on arms reduced the resources available for education and health care, and helped to perpetuate poverty.

66. If women were to achieve economic independence, as well as an equal share of power and resources, it was vital that stereotypical images of women should be abandoned. The media played an important role in conveying an image of women to the general public, and UNESCO could give guidance on that matter.

67. There was a highly unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women. Both legislation and the changing of traditional role models and stereotypes could affect the economic situation of women and ensure greater equality in decision-making and a more balanced division of responsibilities. While relevant laws often existed, practice was too often still in accordance with traditional patterns and values. Traditions and religious customs were highly valued, but there was no excuse for violations of women's rights. Trade unions could play a role in negotiating family-friendly terms of employment. Long-term strategies must be used to combat stereotyped role perceptions, since any change in mentality came slowly. Educational programmes aimed at both sexes and all age groups should be developed to make it clear that caring was not solely the task of women. Increased participation by men in family responsibilities had a positive effect on children, and good educational programmes for boys and increased care tasks for men helped to reduce domestic violence.

68. The Netherlands supported the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the right of petition, and hoped that the Working Group on that issue would be able to finalize its work before the Economic and Social Council met in 1997.

69. Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would depend on Governments taking action to provide the necessary legislation and resources. Educating and empowering women would empower future generations and gradually reduce poverty throughout the world. Non-governmental organizations had a major role to play in setting the agenda, assisting in the implementation of programmes concerned with women's priorities, and in monitoring and evaluating the results. The involvement of both women and men was necessary, and cooperation between them was essential for the success of activities for the advancement of women.

70. Mrs. TAN Yee Kew (Malaysia) said that successful implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action depended on political will and on workable national strategies being adopted by Governments. Her country was fully committed to implementation of the Platform, which had been incorporated into development plans, and had had encouraging success in promoting women's advancement in various sectors over the last decade. Malaysian women had equal access to education, and at tertiary level, where females represented 45 per cent of those enrolled, there had been a significant increase in the professional and technical fields. Women represented about 47 per cent of the workforce, and although still under-represented at professional and managerial levels, changes in favour of women were expected in the near future, since increased numbers of qualified women entered the job market every year. Owing to the rapidly expanding economy, there were increased opportunities and ample room for upward mobility.

71. The Government had addressed the problem of poverty among women through various policies and programmes. Economic and social indicators proved the strides made by women in a number of economic activities. It was gratifying to note that a similar improvement in the economic status of women was taking place in other developing countries experiencing economic growth. The issue of women and poverty could not be addressed in isolation from the wider economic environment. Where poverty and unemployment were rampant, it was unrealistic to create pockets of economically advanced women through catalytic economic programmes for women. Unless such programmes formed a part of integrated economic development, they would be unsustainable and have no chain effect on the rest of the female population.

72. Her delegation condemned the violation of women's rights committed during armed conflict, such as those which had taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and fully supported United Nations resolutions to regard rape during armed conflict as a war crime. The slow progress in bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice was regrettable, and immediate measures should be taken to ensure that they were severely dealt with. On the national level, Malaysia's Domestic Violence Act of 1994 offered protection to both spouses and children against abuse.

73. Her delegation was deeply concerned by the increase in the number of incidents relating to the international trafficking of women, and had co-sponsored United Nations resolution 50/167 on traffic in women and girls. It urged the relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to be more active in addressing that issue. The problem would only be eliminated with the participation of the international community at all levels.

74. Her delegation took the opportunity to commend the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women for its relentless efforts to promote and upgrade the status and well-being of women, and for continuing to develop strategies and programmes for the advancement of women worldwide.

75. Mrs. KABA CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, although the African States were committed to the advancement of women, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was hampered by lack of resources. Official development assistance had fallen sharply, with only a handful of donor countries honouring their previous commitment. At the same time, the African States faced mounting foreign debt.

76. The successes of the United Nations bodies dealing with gender issues had been accomplished against a background of budgetary restrictions and downsizing. Some valuable contributions to the empowerment of women and their integration in development had been made. Women's concerns must, however, be accorded greater attention when development policies and programmes were formulated. There was a need to compile disaggregated statistics reflecting the proportion of spending on development allocated to projects for women. That task could be entrusted to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

77. There had been a marked improvement in the status of women in the Secretariat, though they were still under-represented at the decision-making level. All attempts to redress the gender balance must take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Women working within the Organization must be enabled to reconcile the demands of professional and family life. Measures to deal with sexual harassment must also be adopted.

78. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) gave a comprehensive account of system-wide efforts to mainstream the gender perspective. There was a need, however, to give a clearer picture of the work of the different agencies and programmes, and in particular of the regional commissions, so that their achievements in that area could be compared side by side, perhaps by means of a table. She supported the proposal by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that the reports of States parties should set out their action in the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. With regard to her own region, she called upon the Economic Commission for Africa to take greater account of the concerns of women and of their role in development.

79. Ms. TOMOVÁ (Slovakia) said that her Government, demonstrating its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, had set up a coordinating committee for women's issues. The committee

was currently examining key areas of concern, including legislation, social policy and employment. In addition, a project entitled "Slovak women on the move" had been launched in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The goals of the project were to raise public awareness of the outcome of the Beijing Conference, to shape perceptions of the status of women and to gather information concerning the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action. The research conducted to date on the status of women in Slovak society had shown that many men were unwilling to accept women's equality in the family and, given the current state of the labour market, they were prepared to tolerate discrimination against women in the workplace. Women themselves, influenced by existing stereotypes, considered that they were ill-suited to management roles. The project was therefore aimed at changing the portrayal of women in the mass media.

80. The Beijing Platform had highlighted the problems of rural women. Some 44 per cent of Slovak women lived in the countryside. The recent agricultural reforms had resulted in the worsening of their condition. Many worked for little or no pay. Those wishing to set up their own enterprises had little access to training or support. Her Government had recently organized a workshop to examine the problems of rural women. Her delegation appreciated the opportunity afforded it at the meetings of the various United Nations bodies dealing with gender issues to meet with representatives from all over the world and exchange information and ideas on the situation of women in their respective countries. Such contacts could only serve to deepen international cooperation.

81. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that the treatment of women as second-class citizens was gradually being changed, but much remained to be done. With regard to the status of women in the Secretariat, he had been pleased to note from the Secretary-General's report (A/51/304, para. 9) that the special measures stipulated in administrative instruction ST/AI/412 of 5 January 1996 had yielded a promotion rate of 41.3 per cent for women during the previous year. The appointment of a Special Adviser on Gender Issues bore witness to the importance accorded to the problem of discrimination against women in the workplace. The recent creation by the Secretary-General of the Steering Committee on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat was another step in the right direction. The Organization must ensure that the current financial crisis did not slow the process of women's advancement. Currently, the goal of 50/50 gender distribution overall by the year 2000 appeared illusive.

82. The advancement of women was one of his Government's priorities. Education and training were central to its strategy. Currently, 50 per cent of those in full-time education were girls, a notable achievement given the limited means available. The adoption of a national plan of action for women outlining specific measures aimed at improving the status of women in the period 1997 to 2001 testified to his Government's commitment. As the next millennium approached, all States must ensure that society benefited fully from the contribution women could make.

83. Ms. REGAZZOLI (Argentina) said that the Beijing Conference on women had reaffirmed the relationship between the advancement of women and the progress of society as a whole. The commitments undertaken in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action must be translated into reality urgently; women would be the

chief victims of any delay, for they were the group most severely affected by the aggravation of poverty and continuing illiteracy. The education of women was the key to attaining the objectives of the Beijing Conference and to improving women's role in the economy, their health and their quality of life. Governments must introduce the gender perspective in their policies and programmes. Follow-up to the Beijing Conference must be coordinated with the outcomes of the other major international conferences in the fields of population, the environment, social development, human settlements, food and human rights.

84. The world was currently at a turning point which would have global consequences and was characterized by a great degree of uncertainty. New meaning must therefore be given to the word "solidarity" and funds must be mobilized from new sources, including the private sector, development institutions and bilateral donors.

85. Her delegation was profoundly grateful to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for its hard work. Argentina strongly supported the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention on the right of petition. In the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women it would work to finalize a draft text. Argentina had recently submitted its updated third periodic report on the status of women.

86. At the national level, Argentina had established an ad hoc commission for follow-up to the Beijing Conference, over which she presided. The commission selected priority activities in the different regions of Argentina, according to their needs, within the framework of the Beijing Platform, on both an emergency and a long-term basis. With the support of the mass media, Argentina had disseminated the results of the Beijing Conference and the commitments undertaken by the Government to follow it up. The country had also witnessed a qualitative leap in the political life of women with the implementation of the Act on Quotas. Women legislators now constituted nearly one third of the National Congress.

87. The issue of violence against women must continue to be addressed urgently. In the past 10 years, the legitimacy of violence against Argentine women had been undermined. Legislation must not be confined to the most blatant forms of mistreatment, but must also cover less visible forms of violence, including economic and political violence, violence in the workplace and sexual exploitation. She welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on traffic in women and girls (A/51/309) and urged the international community to take all necessary measures to eradicate that phenomenon. The problems of forced prostitution, rape, sexual abuse and sex tourism must also be dealt with.

88. The draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children and child prostitution and child pornography must be elaborated urgently. In that connection, her delegation strongly supported the Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996. Argentina also welcomed the work being undertaken within the United Nations system on measures to combat traffic in women and girls. Greater public

awareness would help to facilitate government-sponsored action to eradicate such crimes.

89. Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

90. Mrs. DUEÑAS LOZA (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) said that the mandate assigned to INSTRAW upon its establishment in 1976 required a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. Differences of opinion regarding the best solutions to women's issues were an integral part of research in that they generated creative thinking and challenged preconceived notions. Some had questioned the value of the research conducted by INSTRAW, arguing that women's issues were peripheral. It was now broadly understood, however, that those same issues were interlinked with the fundamental questions of sustainable development, quality of life and peace-building. Since its inception, INSTRAW had brought about an evolution in the understanding of the obstacles to women's advancement.

91. Inter-agency coordination was a topic of much debate among Member States. It was vital that the various bodies of the United Nations system should integrate the results of the research carried out by INSTRAW into their own projects. In the short time since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, modest progress had been made in that regard.

92. The proposed merger between INSTRAW and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had cast a shadow over the former. The ensuing climate of uncertainty had resulted in a loss of credibility, the dwindling of contributions and a reduction in programme capacity. To modernize and improve an institution against such a background was a superhuman task. The Board of Trustees had recently expressed the hope that it would be possible to return the levels of financial and institutional support for INSTRAW to those achieved four years previously.

93. Despite the difficulties it faced, INSTRAW had been able to accomplish many of the tasks set out in its programme of work, and the Institute's Trust Fund remained in credit. The results of the recent external audit had been satisfactory. She had drawn up a more realistic programme of work for the 1996-1997 biennium, taking into account the Institute's reduced operative capacity.

94. She had attempted to establish a relationship of trust with her staff based on equity, transparency and good communication. INSTRAW was ready to embark with enthusiasm upon a new stage in its institutional life, but it could not continue to rely upon the hard work of a few committed individuals. Member States must demonstrate their commitment to INSTRAW by providing a level of financial support commensurate with the tasks entrusted to it.

95. Mrs. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO had participated in the Beijing Conference, for which it had prepared, in cooperation with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a manifesto entitled "Towards a gender-inclusive culture through education" (A/51/277, paras. 6-9). UNESCO was committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. Among the 12 critical areas of concern, a number clearly related to the

UNESCO fields of action. Ten special projects to help empower women had been initiated with a budget of some $10 million.

96. Since both Africa and women were among the top priorities of UNESCO, the Director-General had invited three prominent African women, and through them, their respective networks, to monitor UNESCO activities in the region on an experimental basis in the hope of responding better to women's expectations. UNESCO aimed to ensure that all African girls and women had access to education; to promote better communication among African women by developing community radio and Internet links; to support African women scientists, particularly those involved in water and solar-energy projects; and to enhance the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. Such projects testified to UNESCO's commitment to the advancement of women.

97. Ms. CORTI (Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) drew attention to decision 15/I, adopted by CEDAW at its fifteenth session, expressing appreciation for General Assembly resolution 50/202 which granted an extension of the length of its sessions. CEDAW hoped that the Assembly would also authorize it, on an interim basis, to hold at least two three-week sessions annually, each preceded by a session of the working group, with a view to reducing its backlog of States parties' reports to review.

98. CEDAW, at its fourteenth session, had agreed on elements for an optional protocol to the Convention. An optional protocol had also been recommended by the Vienna Conference on Human Rights and the Beijing Conference on women. At its fortieth session, the Commission on the Status of Women, entrusted with the task of elaborating an optional protocol, had requested the Economic and Social Council to renew the mandate of its Working Group. She hoped that the Third Committee would authorize the continuation of the Working Group in order to enable it to draft the protocol, which would enhance the legal significance of the Convention.

99. CEDAW, at its fifteenth session, had discussed follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and its own role in monitoring the implementation of the Platform. States parties to the Convention had been invited to include information on the implementation of the Platform for Action in the periodic reports beginning in September 1996.

100. Difficulties currently confronting CEDAW included not only the backlog of 44 reports to be considered but also the fact that only five of the scheduled eight reports of States parties had been submitted for the January 1997 session. It was not certain that the Division for the Advancement of Women would be able to find States parties willing to replace those which had been unable to fulfil their obligations. Moreover, 52 initial reports, 44 second periodic reports, 55 third periodic reports and 42 fourth periodic reports were overdue. She appealed to the Committee to remind States parties of their obligations.

101. The Convention and the work of CEDAW must be more widely disseminated at a time when the major themes of the women's movement - equality, development and peace, including the elimination of violence against women - had undergone significant changes. It was thus imperative that the General Assembly should

also approve the two three-week sessions preceded by a one-week session of the working group until the amendment of article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention, entered into force. Recent world conferences had reaffirmed that women's rights were human rights and that all human rights were universal, interdependent and indivisible. All those conferences had recognized the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as the basic legal framework for the human rights of women. The Beijing Conference had also recognized the crucial role of CEDAW in guaranteeing those rights. The Committee needed the support of the General Assembly and of the entire United Nations system in order to continue its work.

102. General recommendation 19 of CEDAW formed the basis for the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Violence against women in all its forms was spreading; recent political developments had illustrated that women were still a vulnerable group. CEDAW was concerned with the issues of prostitution as a new kind of slavery and trafficking in women, and one of its members had participated in the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers, held in Manila in May 1996. It was deeply disturbed by the executions, disappearances, and other violations of women's rights in certain countries.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
14th meeting
held on
Friday, 25 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued)*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.14
19 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-81626 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, 90, 180, 210, 277 and Corr.1, 304 and Corr.1, 309, 325 and 391)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued) (A/51/90, 210 and 322)

1. Ms. Enna PARK (Republic of Korea), commenting on the establishment of a framework in the United Nations system to follow up the Beijing Conference, acknowledged the progress documented in reports issued by the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations bodies, including the development of policies to mainstream the gender perspective within the system. However, in several areas, reality had fallen short of expectations.

2. The first area of concern was the Division for the Advancement of Women, where an approved increase in the staffing levels had not yet been fully implemented. The second was the status of women in the Secretariat. Her delegation believed that the Secretariat should serve as a model workplace, but much remained to be done if the target of gender equality was to be reached by the year 2000. The third area of concern was the gender balance of delegations to the United Nations, to which a commitment had been made at the Beijing Conference. As a model of worldwide human-centred development, the United Nations should continue to set the pace for the empowerment of women. That required the political will of each Member State.

3. The Conference had emphasized that implementation of the Platform for Action was the primary responsibility of Governments. The Government had formulated 10 medium- to long-term policy priorities for women, and had constructed the framework of a national plan of action to implement the Platform. The Women's Development Act of 1995 had provided the legal basis for rectifying de jure and de facto gender discrimination in all areas of society, and the Government had also developed several strategies to increase the recruitment of women in public service and enterprises through affirmative action. The Asia-Pacific regional meeting on strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women had been held in the Republic of Korea in September 1996, in order to strengthen regional cooperation. Her Government had given financial support to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Trust Fund for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and would increase its contributions in the future.

4. In order for there to be substantial progress in such critical areas as the poverty of women in developing countries and the protection of the basic human rights of women in armed conflicts and refugee situations, the full participation of each Government, all United Nations bodies and civil society was necessary. Implementation of the Platform for Action would depend on the strength of global cooperation.

5. Mrs. [HAM THI THANH VAN (Viet Nam) said that the programmes of action adopted by a number of recent world conferences, and accelerated cooperation at all levels, had created more favourable conditions for the advancement of women.

6. The Platform for Action of the Beijing Conference reaffirmed the role of women as indispensable for sustainable development. Initial responses to the Platform, such as the creation of new mechanisms, the upgrading of existing structures and the development of participatory processes, had been encouraging. However, many countries were facing budget cuts, lack of resources and a general decline in donor assistance. Nevertheless, determination must be shown in order to realize the pledges made in Beijing.

7. Her Government had accorded high priority to the advancement of women, and had been doing its utmost to bring equality to and empower women in all fields. In cooperation with numerous national organizations, the Government had undertaken a number of activities in response to the Declaration and Platform for Action. The national committee for the advancement of women, set up in 1993, was developing a national programme for women to the year 2000, which would cover the 12 critical areas established by the Conference. That plan would pay special attention to increased participation by women in economic and social development.

8. Political empowerment and the participation of women in public administration was another priority. A number of women held top political posts, while nearly one fifth of the members of the National Assembly were women. Her country was thus making every effort to achieve the advancement of women.

9. Mr. TELLES RIBEIRO (Brazil) said that the Platform for Action was a source of stimulation and guidance for Governments in promoting the cause of women. His country had consistently supported international instruments on women's rights, and some of their directives had been incorporated into the Constitution. His delegation greatly appreciated the outstanding contribution of the United Nations to raising women's awareness of their rights, and had therefore been increasing its financial contribution to UNIFEM. He also expressed support for the activities of INSTRAW.

10. Measures had been taken in his country to implement the Platform for Action, giving priority to the reduction of poverty, the fight against violence and discrimination in the workplace, and the improvement of health services. A national programme for preventing violence had been launched, and the Criminal Code would be amended so that sexual crimes would be considered crimes against the human person rather than against morality. Draft legislation was currently being considered in other areas affecting women's rights. A new poverty programme promoted access to credit and other specific needs of women, particularly as heads of family.

11. Priority had also been given to education, and female students currently represented 50 per cent of school and university enrolments. A professional training programme specifically designed for women had been approved, and measures were being taken to incorporate a gender perspective in school textbooks. Schoolteachers were also being trained in gender issues.

12. With regard to health care and reproductive rights, the Constitution assured the protection of unmarried mothers, granted maternity and paternity leave, and encouraged family planning. Other innovative measures were also being undertaken.

13. Women in Brazil enjoyed increasing participation in the administration and legislature. A law had been approved requiring at least 20 per cent of candidates for municipal elections to be women, and the mayors of main cities were preparing to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

14. Mme. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso) said that since the first World Conference on Women, progress towards the advancement of women had been sporadic. The numerous obstacles to progress had serious consequences for the whole of humanity. It was important to maintain the determination of the Fourth World Conference in order to ensure the development and well-being of women. A pragmatic approach should be adopted in preference to an excessive reliance on theory. At all levels, the question of financial resources was basic to the implementation of the Platform for Action.

15. In Burkina Faso, the Government's objective was to ensure the participation of women in development by improving their access to the means of production and their social status. Any violation of their basic rights should be punished through legislation.

16. The most serious violations currently endured by women and the girl child were sexual exploitation and trafficking. She welcomed the holding of the recent World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, and hoped that measures would be taken to combat that evil, including efforts to raise awareness and involve civil society in the search for solutions. Progress could be made by devising rehabilitation programmes for the victims, training personnel and strengthening cooperation in society. The draft programme of action for the prevention of traffic in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others should be noted at all levels, and States parties should include such information in their national reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Her delegation also supported the recommendations of the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325).

17. Her delegation welcomed the increase in the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, the Committee established under that Convention was currently overwhelmed by a backlog of reports. The proposed increase in the number of its sessions was therefore essential. She accordingly urged States parties to ratify the proposed amendment to the Convention concerning that issue, in order to bring it into force. Sufficient funds should be made available so that the Committee could expedite its work.

18. States parties should also integrate the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action into their reports, in order to accelerate implementation.

19. Women's position in the Secretariat was improving very slowly. The financial crisis should not affect goals, particularly those relating to

positions of responsibility. As to the advertising of vacant posts on the Internet, very few women in developing countries had access to that source. They should, nevertheless, not be excluded.

20. In conclusion, her delegation wished to thank INSTRAW and UNIFEM for the work they did for the advancement of women.

21. Ms. FLOREZ PRIDA (Cuba) said that, one year after the Beijing Conference, the situation of women all over the world was still very difficult.

22. During the preceding year, the Commission on the Status of Women had focused on the need to eradicate poverty. It was inconceivable that, given the progress in science and technology, 25 per cent of the world's population continued to live below the poverty line, and that a growing proportion of them were women. The situation was especially tragic in developing countries, beset by foreign debt, adjustment programmes, unilateral coercive measures and the scourge of war.

23. National and international resources still needed to be mobilized to attain the goals reaffirmed in Beijing. The developing countries required new international cooperation to mobilize additional funds to advance the status of women. Another priority was to continue work to end violence against women.

24. She expressed satisfaction that universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women seemed close to reality. She supported the work of drafting an optional protocol to that Convention on the right of petition, and supported steps taken to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/322). Additional resources from the regular budget should be allocated to efforts to achieve women's equality.

25. A national seminar held recently had examined Cuban women's achievements in areas of special interest identified in Beijing, the main difficulties that still persisted and goals for the next millennium. Important policy proposals had been made and a national plan of action had been outlined; they had reaffirmed and consolidated the current and future roles of women in Cuban society. The Cuban example provided proof that, given political determination and specific programmes aimed at integration, development and ending discrimination, the situation of women could radically change. Indeed, women played a major role at all levels of Cuban society.

26. She pointed out that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had that year noted the negative impact of the blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba, as a result of which some of the programmes for the advancement of women had been suspended and the food situation had worsened.

27. She said that there were no easy solutions to the problems to be overcome in fulfilling the commitments made at Beijing. Her delegation would continue to actively participate in the major role which the United Nations system must play in promoting the climate of cooperation and participation required to cope with that challenge.

28. Ms. ZHANG Fengkun (China) said that great successes had been achieved by Governments and United Nations agencies in preparing plans to follow up the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. That would greatly improve women's status around the world. However, commitments by Governments to implement the Platform for Action must be scrupulously honoured. Plans prepared by Governments and United Nations agencies, while commendable, must be successfully carried out.

29. The eradication of poverty was the most urgent of the 12 areas of concern, especially since women accounted for two thirds of the world's poor, lacking basic conditions for survival. Moreover, international cooperation, with the rich developed countries helping the developing countries with resources and technology, was essential, and she appealed to the developed countries to achieve as soon as possible the target set for official development assistance. The United Nations, for its part, must devote greater resources to women's issues, especially since expenditures for some non-priority programmes were increasing despite the financial crisis.

30. She stressed her Government's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. First, it would provide cultural and technical training to some 10 million women in poor areas, prepare women-oriented economic programmes to help the poor and find jobs for poor women so that by the end of the century, women would have stable access to food and clothing. Second, it would enhance women's participation in management and decision-making in social and State affairs, and increase the percentage of women occupying leadership positions at all levels of Government. Third, it would seek to eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged women by the year 2000 and raise the percentage of women students at all educational levels. Fourth, it would strive to ensure that both urban and rural women enjoyed sound health care and reproductive health services. Lastly, it would formulate administrative measures to implement legislation on the protection of the rights and interests of women, including measures to curb violence against women.

31. Her Government was ready to join with the international community in working to turn solemn commitments into actions in order to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

32. Ms. WONG (New Zealand) said that fundamental progress in achieving the equal rights of men and women reaffirmed in the Charter was long overdue, and much remained to be done both at the national level and in the United Nations. She agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, that it was time to move from policy formulation to implementation.

33. Her delegation believed that Governments should work with non-governmental organizations; consultations had been held throughout her country to familiarize women with the Platform for Action and to identify priority areas. The resulting report would be used by the Government to develop its implementation strategy, which would focus on a number of key issues, including the gender pay gap, the rights of indigenous women and girls, enhancement of women's role in decision-making, and the collection of data on all aspects of women's lives.

34. A key part of her country's strategy to implement the Platform for Action was the mainstreaming of gender analysis in all public policies and programmes. A framework for gender analysis had been published in May 1996, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs had since worked to promote the framework in the public and private sectors. The Platform for Action had been used to intensify the debate on what remained to be done. A national long-term strategy was being completed in order to build on the gains already made.

35. With regard to global action, a key task was to mainstream a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations. She therefore welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues. It was important that the Secretariat, especially the Division for the Advancement of Women, should be given adequate resources; she noted some delays in making appointments to several posts in the Division, and hoped that the vacancies would soon be filled.

36. She expressed serious concern at the difficult circumstances under which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was working, as was clear from the Secretary-General's report (A/51/277). She supported the Committee's need to hold two three-week sessions annually. New Zealand had recently formally accepted the amendment to the Convention enabling the Committee to extend its meeting time, and urged others to do the same in order to reach the required two-thirds majority for it to come into force.

37. She welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Working Group established to consider a draft optional protocol to the Convention. That mechanism would help to address violations of women's human rights, but many important issues had first to be resolved. She urged the Secretary-General to provide from within existing resources the means for the Working Group to meet during the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

38. In the interests of efficiency, her delegation would support consideration of a Third Committee omnibus resolution on the subject of women, incorporating in particular the annual resolution on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. She welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the latter issue (A/51/304), and was pleased that the 35-per-cent target had now been achieved, but was concerned that the overall goal of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 might not be reached. Despite the financial crisis, she felt that other means to improve the status of women in the Secretariat were not being fully exploited. She rejected the suggestion in the report (ibid., para. 34) that the 50/50 goal set by the General Assembly should perhaps be revised, and urged the Secretariat to redouble its efforts to increase the numbers of women at the D-1 level and above, which remained unacceptably low.

39. She expressed surprise at the changes contained in document A/51/304/Corr.1, in which the Secretary-General modified the conclusion as set out in his report (A/51/304), which had already been introduced. The improvements seemed marginal and she wondered why the Secretary-General seemed at the last minute to be trying to paint a better picture. She felt that the words of the Charter and of the Beijing Conference should not be mere empty promises and that everyone must work to recognize basic human rights and empower women.

40. Mr. DONOKUSUMO (Indonesia) welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322), and was encouraged that most of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system had adopted guidelines for mainstreaming. He also welcomed the Economic and Social Council's endorsement of the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women. He looked forward to the mid-term review to be undertaken in 1998. He was concerned, however, that the financial crisis, especially further staff cuts, would threaten implementation. If Member States seriously wished to end discrimination against women, then sufficient levels of funding must be made available to follow up the Beijing commitments.

41. His Government remained committed to achieving the goals in the Beijing Platform for Action, and was in the process of formulating its own implementation plans. They would address development and poverty alleviation, the most serious problems affecting equality for women, within the context of its overall development programme, which aimed to reduce poverty drastically. There was a significant level of cooperation between the Government, national women's organizations and non-governmental organizations.

42. He reiterated his support for increasing the participation of women in the United Nations system, including in policy-making positions, provided the principle of geographical distribution was maintained.

43. His delegation was concerned by violence against women migrant workers, a situation which must be resolved. His Government had adopted general policy guidelines in an effort to guarantee the protection of Indonesian overseas workers, and had also undertaken to provide them with the vocational training required by the host country.

44. He supported the request made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for additional meeting time, in the light of the increasing backlog in the consideration of States parties' reports. He reaffirmed his delegation's commitment to the Beijing agreements and, in partnership with the international community, would continue its efforts, begun at independence, until ultimate success was achieved.

45. Mr. HABONIMANA (Burundi) said that his country fully supported the conclusions of the Beijing Conference. Within the limits of its means, the Government carried out programmes for reducing poverty among women and promoting their access to education, training, and health-care and their active participation in development.

46. On behalf of the African Group, he pointed out that in July 1996 the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had adopted an important resolution concerning the Beijing Platform for Action. It had reaffirmed the commitments undertaken by African Governments at Beijing and underscored the central need to integrate women's concerns into policies and programmes aimed at combating poverty. Ensuring access to services such as education, health care, employment, maternal and child care and credit had been considered essential for the total integration of women into development. OAU

member States had been called upon to adopt strategies to halt the feminization of poverty, undertake legislative and administrative reforms to provide women with equal access to economic resources, promote the participation of women in decision-making at all levels, include questions relating to women's concerns in all economic and social policy directives, and broaden participation by women in the settlement of conflicts and protect them in situations of armed conflict. The OAU Secretary-General had been called upon to include questions relating to women in all OAU programmes and policies. To that end, its women's unit would be restructured in order to enhance its capacity for coordinating the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

47. In spite of the continued existence of certain discriminatory attitudes linked to negative aspects of the traditional culture, women in Burundi benefited from a legal framework enabling them to reach their potential in society, notwithstanding the state of war which still paralysed the country. Burundian women's associations had done much to promote the emancipation of women. A sustained effort to heighten public awareness was nevertheless necessary in order to settle questions linked to inheritance and land ownership and to ensure the total integration of women in development.

48. The crisis affecting Burundi since October 1993 had dealt a serious blow to almost all its development programmes. Women and children had endured the most suffering in that human tragedy. Many women had become widows and were traumatized by the tragedies that they had experienced, including rape and all types of cruelty. There was a lack of housing, food, health care and clothing. The climate of insecurity and fear in the refugee camps took a heavy toll on the physical and mental health of the women and children concerned.

49. His delegation expressed appreciation for the humanitarian assistance provided to all those persons, particularly by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the European Union as well as various countries and non-governmental organizations. Efforts to help women and children who were victims of the crisis in Burundi must be stepped up. A round table for mobilizing assistance to the victims should be organized under United Nations auspices. Substantial funds should be provided to international and regional organizations dealing with women's questions in order to provide emergency aid to the victims of armed conflict in Burundi and other African countries. UNIFEM should be given the means to take greater action on behalf of women. Civil society could play a more important role, with the assistance of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and various donors, in order to assist population groups in distress, particularly women and children in countries torn by armed conflict.

50. His Government sought to address the political and ethnic divisions in Burundi that had caused so much loss of life in the past, and was committed to restoring peace and security, organizing a dialogue with all parties to the conflict and initiating a democratic process taking account of the interests of all groups. Accordingly, Burundi was counting on the support of the international community in order to achieve success in creating lasting conditions for peace and prosperity for all.

51. Ms. FOO Chi Hsia (Singapore) said that her delegation supported the suggestion to have an omnibus draft resolution on the two agenda items dealing with women's issues.

52. On the question of violence against women migrant workers, she felt that the report (A/51/325) was extremely controversial and represented an obstacle to achieving consensus. She hoped that the current session's draft resolution on the question would not significantly depart from General Assembly resolution 50/168, which had reflected a delicate balance between various points of view. The key question was whether and how the draft resolution should take note of the report and what weight, if any, should be given to the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers. Her delegation believed that those conclusions and recommendations were procedurally and substantively flawed.

53. The report in question distorted the letter and intent of the mandate set forth in paragraph 8 of resolution 50/168 "to develop concrete indicators for determining the situation of women migrant workers". Dealing with the question of violence against women migrant workers in a balanced way required a comprehensive consideration of the total situation as it existed. The situation of women migrant workers must be viewed in the context of the economic and other benefits that they also undoubtedly enjoyed. If that were not the case, no one would leave home to work abroad.

54. The statement in paragraph 18 of the report that there was "wide acceptance that the issue of violence against female migrant workers needs to be placed on the global agenda" clearly misrepresented a complex reality. If there really was such "wide acceptance", it should be asked why only a fraction of the 185 Member States had become party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The poor response to that Convention showed that the vast majority of Member States had reservations on whether a global approach was appropriate. The only practical way to address the problem was through the national legal and administrative frameworks of receiving countries.

55. The recommendations by the expert group were also extremely intrusive, suggesting, inter alia, that undocumented migrant workers should receive services superior to those enjoyed by citizen workers of receiving countries. Furthermore, the recommendations also focused on the obligations of the receiving countries, glossing over the sending countries' responsibility to their own citizens to reduce the outflow of migrant workers. Such considerations clearly demonstrated that document A/51/325 was seriously flawed.

56. Singapore had an excellent record of protecting all workers, whether foreigners or citizens, men or women. While not perfect, Singapore was well known to be a relatively safe, corruption-free, crime-free and accountable society. Crime rates in general were low and its laws were strictly and impartially enforced. Her country had a comprehensive civil and penal system as well as administrative measures to protect all workers, citizens or foreigners. Women were specially protected under the Women's Charter. Protection against sexual abuse and violence was provided under the Penal Code. Foreign workers were covered under the Workmen's Compensation Act and allowed to join trade

unions. Employers found guilty of abusing domestic workers were liable to heavy sentences, including jail terms and corporal punishment, and were permanently barred from employing foreign domestic workers in the future.

57. Ms. SILWAL (Nepal) said that, even with the approach of the twenty-first century, gender bias was almost universal. Women were discriminated against in jobs and remuneration and in participation in decision-making at every level. Nepal fully supported the United Nations efforts to promote the advancement of women, particularly in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the most effective way. UNIFEM and INSTRAW should play a more active role in empowering women worldwide, promoting women's human rights and encouraging their leadership in ensuring sustainable human development. The Commission on the Status of Women, in particular, and the Economic and Social Council, in general, should guide the efforts of the United Nations system by taking major policy decisions. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action required a concerted effort by all United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in general. In that connection, her delegation appreciated the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to address the feminization of poverty and the economic empowerment of women. Easy access to credit and the generation of employment through small entrepreneurship by rural women were basic ways to further their advancement.

58. Her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's initiatives in mainstreaming a system-wide gender perspective and hoped that the working groups established would facilitate the implementation of the Platform for Action in an integrated way. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Nepal hoped that female victims of violence, especially women and children in armed conflicts, and refugee and displaced women would receive sufficient support from the international community and, in that regard, strongly supported the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The role of national and international media was also crucial for promoting the cause of women, who should be given a larger role in projecting the image of women in the media as leaders of society and the nation as a whole.

59. Almost 75 per cent of the women in Nepal were illiterate, which was a great handicap to development. The Government had given heavy emphasis to the education of girls, which was the only way to ensure the long-term advancement of women in all spheres of society. In formulating its ninth five-year plan, Nepal was seeking to incorporate the basic guidelines set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. Various programmes were being implemented in order to achieve universal primary education through increased enrolment of girls in schools, and encouraging a maximum number of educated women to become teachers. The Ministry of Women and Social Welfare was the Government's focal point for the advancement of women. With the establishment of multiparty democracy in Nepal and the setting up of the Ministry, a general awakening with regard to gender issues had spread throughout society.

60. Mr. HETTIARACHCHI (Sri Lanka) said that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action lay with the national authorities, and noted with satisfaction that many Governments were proceeding with that task in cooperation with relevant institutions and non-governmental

organizations. Sri Lanka had taken specific measures to implement the Platform. A national plan of action for women had been drawn up to identify problems in the areas of critical concern and to implement specific strategies and measures.

61. The Commission on the Status of Women had taken an important initiative with regard to the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women concerning the right of petition. He looked forward to the renewal of the mandate of the Working Group on that question and hoped that duplication of the work by treaty-monitoring bodies with similar mandates would be avoided.

62. Sri Lanka reaffirmed its support for General Assembly resolution 50/168 on violence against women migrant workers. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women were important mechanisms for addressing that problem. There were about 500,000 Sri Lankan migrant workers and nearly half of them were women. They faced various constraints and hardship, including lack of proper service contracts, non-payment of wages, lack of insurance and social security, and sexual harassment. Both sending and receiving States had obligations in protecting the basic human rights of migrant workers and should conduct regular consultations to protect their internationally accepted rights. National and international awareness of that question should be enhanced.

63. Sri Lanka had acceded in March 1996 to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Once in force, the Convention would facilitate international action in that field. He hoped that countries which lacked national standards concerning migrant workers would formulate legislation to ensure greater harmony with the standards laid down by the Convention.

64. His country shared the international concern over trafficking in women and girls. The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities had done valuable work in that regard. Based on that work and national experience, preventive strategies should be devised and implemented at the national and international levels. Trafficking in women and girls had international criminal dimensions and required new forms of cooperation between States and international organizations. Practical approaches were needed to assist women victims of transnational trafficking under the guise of migration for employment. General Assembly resolutions on trafficking in women should include a reference to that aspect of trafficking in persons.

65. With respect to improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, Sri Lanka noted with satisfaction that the target of 35-per-cent overall representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had been reached, but noted with concern the failure to achieve the target of 25 per cent for women in senior decision-making levels.

66. Ms. ACUNER (Turkey) said that the report on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325) set forth important indicators of violence and vulnerability and to a certain extent addressed the problems of a number of countries. It was hoped that additional indicators and data would be developed to include various

types of reasons for migration by women and young girls, such as natural and man-made disasters. INSTRAW and other United Nations bodies could determine further indicators relating to the migration of women. Her delegation would welcome a follow-up report at the next session of the General Assembly on steps taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination and other United Nations bodies to implement recommendations put forward.

67. The document on the advancement of women through and in programmes of the United Nations system (A/51/180) indicated that measures were being taken by appropriate coordinating mechanisms with regard to gender perspectives in policies and programmes, gender training and the promotion of women staff members. She hoped that a full report on the concrete follow-up actions could be submitted at the next session of the General Assembly.

68. Her delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/39 on INSTRAW and supported the view that the Institute should report also to the Second Committee in areas of environment, natural resources and migration. She hoped that that resolution would be implemented accordingly.

69. Programmes emanating from major United Nations conferences needed to be analysed in a more holistic manner; it would be useful if a document could be prepared for the next session of the General Assembly analysing the implementation of those plans and programmes in relation to gender activities undertaken by the entire United Nations system. That would enable better evaluation and monitoring of the necessary integrated approach.

70. Her delegation supported the proposed amendment of article 20 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and welcomed the ongoing work on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention.

71. Her Government had pursued the policy of ensuring participation of women in all aspects of the development, and had committed itself to withdrawing all reservations made upon ratification of the Convention. The Government and the women's movement in Turkey had been working together for the realization of that strategic objective, which would contribute highly to the enhancement of the status of women in their country.

72. She called upon Member States to expand their financial support for INSTRAW, the only institute of its kind in the United Nations system. Without solid research, data collection, training and dissemination of information, gender equality and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would be only partial. Improved financing should also be provided for the Division for the Advancement of Women and for UNIFEM.

73. Mrs. APONTE de ZACKLIN (Venezuela) said that Venezuela had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1983, and supported the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for two annual three-week sessions. Venezuela had also taken a leading role in the struggle against violence waged by the Organization of American States, which had led to the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of

Violence against Women, which had been ratified by 23 States. The Venezuelan Criminal Code laid down severe penalties for violence against women.

74. Her delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the percentage of women occupying senior posts within the United Nations. Despite the financial crisis, the principle that 50 per cent of senior posts should be occupied by women must be pursued so that, in the coming century, the United Nations could play a leading role in gender-related issues.

75. Despite the economic crisis, her Government had increased its support for the national women's council in Venezuela. A new labour law had been adopted, enshrining the principle of equal opportunities and equal pay for women and men, and providing considerable benefits for working mothers. Programmes for the empowerment of women included workshops, seminars and courses for training and employment, workshops designed to increase women's participation in political leadership and to train women candidates for local elections, forums for information exchange, and training programmes at the university level. Draft laws were being prepared against family violence and sexual harassment, for the protection of children and adolescents, and for reform of the law on equal opportunities for women.

76. Policy planning incorporated goals established by the national women's council, designed to enable women to achieve equal opportunities in all areas of the country's life. Government projects incorporating a gender perspective included those concerning violence, health, education, employment, the economy and the environment. They were the response of the Venezuelan State to its duty to promote full participation for women in society as a guarantee of democratization and social equity.

77. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had been a historic step in women's struggle to take their proper place in society. The international community must strive to pass on to future generations a society free of discrimination, particularly sexual discrimination. Only then could humanity move forward towards genuine development with the participation of all sectors of society.

78. He welcomed the recommendation of the Commission for Social Development that a gender perspective should be integrated into policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty. A number of United Nations bodies had taken steps to implement that proposal.

79. The involvement of regional organizations was essential. He noted that all the United Nations regional commissions had taken decisions which would contribute to improving the general situation of women throughout the world. The African Economic Community had published a guide to the implementation of the African Platform for Action, showing the determination of African countries to make the advancement of women a central element in their development policies. The advancement of women and the promotion of their legal and social rights would be central to the policies of African Governments during the coming three years.

80. In Senegal, the plan of action for women was centred upon education, health, economic development and the struggle against poverty. The plan would cover the years from 1997 to 2001, and should provide for coordinated and efficient planning and implementation of future activities for the advancement of women.

81. He paid tribute to non-governmental organizations which, particularly in Africa, were endeavouring to make women fully aware of their rights, the legitimacy of their aspirations, and the essential nature of their participation in the harmonious development of society.

82. Mr. BORDA (Colombia) said that his Government, as well as other sectors of society, had taken action to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. A high-level body responsible directly to the President of the Republic, had the task of promoting the incorporation of the gender perspective into national policies and programmes and for following up efforts in the legislative and judicial branches to implement the Platform for Action with the assistance of non-governmental organizations. It was working on the basis of a two-year plan, giving priority to education, health, employment, justice and rural development.

83. The goals were to eliminate barriers to the advancement of women, to protect their economic, social and cultural rights and uphold humanitarian law in armed conflicts, to ensure increased political participation by women and to eliminate violence against them. Women's organizations as well as government bodies were involved in the planning, implementation, follow-up and assessment of commitments. Consultation was taking place with local officials for the creation or strengthening of agencies responsible for women's issues.

84. A number of women senators who had represented Colombia at the Beijing Conference had organized a meeting within the national Congress to publicize the outcome of the Conference, and government ministers had taken part in a discussion of policies concerning international commitments in favour of women, and had reported on progress made. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court had already established a considerable body of jurisprudence on the protection of the rights of women and girls.

85. An Andean subregional forum had been organized, with the participation of governmental and non-governmental representatives from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, to establish a common agenda for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action.

86. The effectiveness of such efforts would be determined by the volume of resources available. It was vital that the international community should provide assistance in support of gender-equality programmes in developing countries. The United Nations system had an important part to play in the creation of a new culture conducive to the elimination of barriers to equality, development and peace for women.

87. Miss MORGAN-MOSS (Panama) said that her delegation hoped that the beacon lit at the Beijing Conference would continue to be a guiding light for the entire world. The General Assembly, and in particular the Third Committee, had

a political role, in the highest sense of the word, in ensuring the implementation of undertakings made at the Conference.

88. Forums, seminars and meetings organized in Panama to discuss women's issues had shown the openness of Panamanian society to the commitments entered into at Beijing, which had been a landmark for the country's women. Her Government attached great importance to the elaboration of an optional protocol to guarantee implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the protocol would be one of the pillars of the commitments entered into at the Vienna and Beijing Conferences, and its text should be negotiated and adopted as soon as possible.

89. The "Expomujer" conference, organized in Panama by a national association of business and professional women, had vigorously promoted the role of women in growth, economic development and social harmony in Panama. During 1996, women had participated in national debates on the challenges which the country would face in the twenty-first century. A gender perspective still needed to become more widespread, despite increasing Government actions in favour of young and adolescent girls, indigenous women, and women with disabilities.

90. The Beijing Platform for Action was mostly oriented towards developing countries and countries in transition. The Platform's aspiration to globality was based on the hope that understanding of individual countries' problems would lead to international solidarity, generosity and mutual assistance.

91. Her delegation welcomed the decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its latest session, particularly those concerning follow-up to the Beijing Platform, and also the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1996/6 concerning the role of regional platforms and programmes of action in the review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

92. In Latin America and the Caribbean, greater use should be made of the capacities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and there should be increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In addition, the regional offices of the relevant specialized agencies had useful roles to play. The advantages of South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue should also be borne in mind, by the leadership of the United Nations in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Monday, 28 October 1996
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

later: Mr. TESSEMA (Vice-Chairman) (Ethiopia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued)*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.15
19 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-81653 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, 90, 180, 210, 277 and Corr.1), 304 and Corr.1, 309, 325 and 391; and A/50/509 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued) (A/51/90, 210 and 322)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to a background report issued by the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "The advancement of women through and in the programmes of the United Nations system: What happens after the Fourth World Conference on Women?" (A/50/509 and Add.1).

2. Ms. RUSSELL (Barbados) said that her Government was deeply committed to women's equality. Since the Beijing Conference, the Barbados Bureau of Women's Affairs had been actively involved with ministries, major corporations, and private sector and non-governmental organizations in implementing the relevant sections of the National Strategic Plan of Action and the policy and initiative section on the strengthening of family life and the status of women. The Bureau had also begun the process of updating the national policy statement on women, incorporating government policies in order to ensure the equality of women in all spheres of life in Barbados. As part of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the recent United Nations development conferences, the Bureau had been working with all relevant government bodies in coordinating a national plan of action in which gender awareness was central to all components. In that connection, she expressed appreciation to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its direction and guidance.

3. In executing its programmes for women, Barbados would be particularly mindful of the critical role played by women in sustainable development. She joined other delegations in underscoring the importance of women in food production and in the educational sector and noted the useful role being played by FAO and UNESCO in those areas. Barbados also subscribed to the views expressed earlier in the year in the Commission on the Status of Women on the need for poverty eradication and combating the feminization of poverty.

4. Her country had been working closely at the subregional level in Caribbean Community programmes for the advancement of women. At a recent meeting, Barbados had strongly supported a recommendation to develop an information kit for promoting gender awareness, which would be extremely useful to new ministries, administrative heads and personnel dealing with women's affairs. Providing such information and evaluating gender awareness were crucial for ensuring continuity in promoting equality between men and women.

5. In cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bureau of Women's Affairs had actively participated in the Caribbean Community Regional Plan of Action, which was an important follow-up to the Beijing Conference and would be finalized later that month. Non-governmental organizations in Barbados and the region had traditionally played a vital role in the women's movement. The Caribbean Women's Association

had held a biannual conference in Barbados in April 1996, charting a regional plan of action for women's non-governmental organizations. Prominent parliamentarians, women's rights activists and non-governmental organizations had recently taken part in a rally in Barbados focusing on the issues of poverty, women's self-esteem and violence against women. The UNIFEM office in Barbados had recently lauded the progress made by the country in enacting legislation relating to social justice for women. The Family Law and the Domestic Violence Act had been identified as an important step in safeguarding the rights of women and, together with related policies to advance equality and education, should pave the way for the further progress by women in all sectors of society.

6. Her country commended the work accomplished by UNIFEM and was especially grateful to the Barbados office, which had provided useful guidance and technical assistance to the women's movement, particularly in programmes aimed at enhancing gender awareness and strategies to ensure the economic and social empowerment of women. She also expressed her country Government's support for the stupendous work by the United Nations in promoting the advancement of women and underscored the need to ensure adequate resources for the Division for the Advancement of Women to enable it to carry out effectively the Beijing Platform for Action. In view of the possible adverse effects of global trends such as trade liberalization and rapid technological change, the need for continued United Nations action in the fight for women's equality was greater than ever.

7. Mr. KIMBERG (Denmark) said that his country attached the highest importance to the full implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Beijing Conference. In April 1996, his Government had submitted to Parliament an action plan for the national and international follow-up to the Platform for Action. The plan focused on mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and all planning. As a pilot project, all bills within the purview of the Ministry of Labour would be assessed from a gender perspective. The assessment would then be included in the comments on the bills presented to parliament. Experience would determine whether such a gender-impact assessment should be extended to other areas. At least every second year, municipal and county authorities would report on the equality status of their employees. Central government institutions had to complete the drafting of action plans for equality by the end of 1996. The educational system in Denmark endeavoured to ensure equal opportunities for both girls and boys. The concept of gender equality would be further strengthened in relevant legislation and school curricula, and training centres and universities.

8. In order to eliminate the gender-segregated labour market, training programmes and introductory vocational courses had been introduced for women in traditionally male-dominated areas and for men in traditionally female-dominated areas. One of the most important ways to promote equal opportunities for men and women was to enhance the relationship between family life and working life. A new campaign had been launched to make leave-of-absence schemes for child care more attractive to men. The Government was striving to change attitudes on the part of employers and employees through campaigns explaining legal provisions of importance to families with children.

9. In order to prevent double discrimination against foreign women and women belonging to ethnic minorities, his Government addressed problems concerning those women's legal status and integration into Danish society. The action plan also dealt with Danish policy on development cooperation and confirmed the overall objective of gender-specific poverty eradication, focusing on the different roles and needs of men and women. The recommendations in the Beijing Platform for Action would be integrated into Denmark's development cooperation by endeavouring to foster respect for human rights through a political dialogue with recipient countries and through specific projects. Increased emphasis would be given to incorporating women's human rights in such a dialogue, focusing on equal rights and non-discrimination, through, inter alia, ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

10. With regard to violence against women, the Danish Government had focused specifically on female genital mutilation and had hosted an international seminar on that question in 1995. As a result of the seminar, guidelines for the prevention of female genital mutilation through development assistance had been laid down and published. The Equal Status Council and the Committee on International Equality Affairs would be closely monitoring Denmark's implementation of the Beijing commitments. The Government would submit a further progress report on that question to Parliament in the next two years.

11. Mr. YUSOF (Singapore) said that, as a small country with no natural resources, Singapore had to tap into the global economic network and develop its human resources to their fullest extent. Accordingly, the total well-being of society in general could be enhanced only by developing the full potential of women. The globalization of trade and finance had brought direct foreign investment and expanded the job opportunities, enabling women to join the workforce and assume decision-making positions. The challenge lay in seizing the opportunities for income and employment expansion in order to promote equitable development and gender equality.

12. His Government was committed to the fullest development of all citizens for their own empowerment. Women in Singapore were given equal access to education, training and health-care services. The Government advocated an equal-opportunity policy for employment of both men and women in all sectors based on the principle of democracy. Education was one of the most important means to give women the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. The equal-opportunity policy had ensured virtually equal enrolment of males and females in school. Even in tertiary institutions, 43 per cent of the students were female, and more female students were entering disciplines previously dominated by men. Women represented about 40 per cent of Singapore's workforce. The Government had implemented various schemes and measures to support women's economic participation, including child-care facilities, subsidy schemes, special tax benefits and programmes for working mothers. Women in Singapore had equal access to nutrition, education and health programmes. The country's low infant-mortality and maternal-mortality rates were the result of increased budgetary allocations to primary health care and the preventive aspects of reproductive health. There were also community-based programmes to meet the special needs of elderly women. The Women's Charter, a landmark piece of legislation introduced in 1961, provided a

comprehensive legal basis to protect the rights of women and girls in areas ranging from domestic violence, sexual and physical offences against women, exploitation of women and girls, and equality between husbands and wives. Singapore was determined to make further progress in its efforts to ensure gender equality.

13. Ms. BAHREMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that women's enjoyment of all human rights was an essential prerequisite for the development of society. The advancement of women should be addressed at three integrated levels: the family, society and the State. There was a need to ensure respect for each country's moral, cultural and religious values, including respect for the family, which was the basic unit of society. As a Muslim woman, she felt that it was her responsibility to speak out against those who claimed that religions based on divine revelation, in particular Islam, provided no status for women. That was far from the truth. Fourteen centuries earlier, when women had had neither social nor human standing in the world, Islam had recognized the exalted status and human equality of women. On the basis of that notion, women were encouraged to participate in all spheres of social, economic and political life.

14. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, her country had endeavoured to improve the status of women in all areas. In addition to their role in the family, they were participating vigorously in all economic, social and political activities, serving as members of Parliament, advisers and under-secretaries to the President and ministers. The Women's Council, a policy-making body for women's issues, had been established to enhance the status of women.

15. Women were active in art, cultural activities, journalism, the film industry, the mass media and higher education. Health services had been greatly expanded and, as a result, women's life expectancy had increased to 65 years, and childbirth-related mortality had been reduced to 45 per 100,000. The civil code and the administrative regulations were currently under review in order to create an environment more conducive to the empowerment of women. In implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Islamic Republic of Iran had launched comprehensive programmes to promote women's rights and expand their opportunities. Women's empowerment at the national, regional and global level required a multidimensional approach in the cultural, economic, political and social fields. One of the problems facing women striving for empowerment was the attempt by some to impose on others a specific ideology, devoid of spirituality and alien to human nature, thus undermining the existing cultural diversity of mankind. There was a need to create a vision for the future and work towards building a more supportive environment for the realization of women's rights and a world in which women enjoyed equal access to the highest political and economic opportunities.

16. Ms. KIDRON (Israel) said her delegation shared the view that the two agenda items under consideration should be taken up together in the future. During the past year, Israeli non-governmental organizations and various government offices had conducted numerous meetings bringing the message of Beijing to a wider spectrum of audiences. The Committee of Women's Organizations had established working groups to evaluate the situation in Israel with regard to women and poverty, women and health, and women and the environment. Within the next two months, the working groups would present the results of their surveys and

recommendations on future steps to be taken in each area. The media should be utilized to raise public awareness of women's rights and issues. Since the Beijing Conference, Israeli newspapers, television and radio had become more involved with women's issues, and extensive coverage was given to cases of violence against women. Frequent appearances in the media by women political and business leaders and experts in various fields would create role models for younger women.

17. Most Israeli women served in the army, were part of the workforce and enjoyed an advanced system of maternity leave and affordable daycare. Israel's legislation promoting equality of men and women was among the most advanced in the world. Together with women's non-governmental organizations, her Government was fully committed to achieving the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. For example, the Committee on the Status of Women in the Israeli Parliament had the full cooperation of all the different parties and was in constant contact with various women's non-governmental organizations and women from the academic, financial and business worlds. Since the Committee's establishment in 1992, women's issues had been increasingly on the Parliament's agenda. That had resulted in affirmative action legislation and the recent launching of a campaign by the Prime Minister aimed at eliminating domestic violence.

18. Israel was sparing no effort to reach the goal of total equality for women in all spheres of life and shared its experience in that regard with other countries through programmes that trained women in ways to achieve equality and improve their lives.

19. Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) said that change was needed in many issues affecting women's lives, including the feminization of poverty, discrimination, disease, deeply entrenched traditions, practices and attitudes that perpetuated inequality and subordination, violence and sexual exploitation, and marginalization. The Beijing Platform for Action had made a bold attempt to address all those problems and indicate strategies and benchmarks for the achievement of certain objectives. At the national level, Governments bore primary responsibility for implementation of the Platform. His delegation welcomed plans to establish or improve the effectiveness of national machinery for the advancement of women at the highest political level. His country had made progress in implementing some objectives. For example, the Platform for Action had been translated into the major local languages in order to ensure wider dissemination. Legal practitioners and law enforcement agencies had been sensitized in their handling of cases of violence against women, and watchdog committees had been established to monitor such violence. Policies and programmes were analysed from a gender perspective, and the momentum of change was visible everywhere.

20. At the regional level, the Economic Commission for Africa played a leading role in assisting Member States in their implementation of the Platform, focusing human and financial resources on enhancing women's political leadership role and economic empowerment and promoting their legal and human rights. His delegation appreciated the important role of non-governmental organizations in the preparation and implementation of the Platform for Action, and the pressure they were able to bring to bear on Governments.

21. In order for the United Nations to assume the leadership role expected of it in implementing, monitoring and assessing the outcome of the Conference, an integrated approach to mainstreaming a gender perspective in all its policies and programmes would have to be adopted. Some encouraging initiatives had been put in place. His delegation considered the concept of "mainstreaming" as simply a matter of adopting policies and programmes designed and evaluated in terms of the benefits for women. The United Nations system must set a good example by, for example, improving the status of women in the Secretariat. While gains had been made in recent years with regard to gender equality in the distribution of posts at all levels, the percentage of women in policy and decision-making roles remained very low. His delegation urged the Secretary-General to persist in the full implementation of his Strategic Plan of Action for the improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat 1995 to 2000, despite the financial crisis, and also called upon Member States to assist the Secretariat in that endeavour.

22. His delegation had been interested to note that the Administrative Committee on Coordination had set up an Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality under the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues. In his delegation's view, the work of the Committee should extend beyond Headquarters to operational and field level activities, and should deal with gender issues in developed as well as in developing countries. He therefore urged the Secretary-General to reconsider the appointment of the Special Advisor on a full-time basis, with supervisory responsibilities for the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women. He applauded the excellent work done by the Commission on the Status of Women. However, in order to achieve results, the resources allocated to gender mainstreaming and women-targeted activities should match the scale of the programmes and goals intended to benefit women all over the world.

23. Mr. Tessema (Ethiopia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

24. Mr. KAMARA (Sierra Leone) said that sociocultural practices and religious beliefs had created a disparity between the rights and opportunities accorded men and women, in particular in the developing countries. As a result, women did not participate fully in the development process. Yet it was now widely recognized that the empowerment of women was a critical factor in the eradication of poverty. Education must be a priority, for development studies had shown that literacy enhanced women's capacity to deal with health, economic and other issues affecting the well-being of their families. Another crucial area was reproductive health. Women the world over experienced complications during pregnancy and childbirth, while some faced the dangers of backstreet abortions.

25. The recent major United Nations conferences on social questions, in particular the Fourth World Conference on Women, had represented a major step forward in the field of women's rights, but much remained to be done. Governments must bear the primary responsibility for implementing the commitments made at those conferences, with the United Nations providing support for initiatives at the national level.

26. Sierra Leone had recently emerged from 30 years of one-party rule and military dictatorship. The new, democratically elected Government was committed to the goals of social and economic development and the advancement of women. To that end, it had established a Ministry for Gender and Children's Affairs. The Ministry of Health had expanded training of medical personnel and was building new health centres with the aim of making primary health-care services available to approximately 70 per cent of the population. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had made an important contribution to the reduction of maternal mortality by increasing the provision of contraception and raising awareness of the link between family planning and development. In addition, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had carried out valuable work in the field of immunization.

27. Regrettably, armed groups were still active in some regions of the country and, as a result, development programmes were restricted to the capital, the surrounding area and the provincial capitals. Negotiations between the Government and the rebel groups were continuing. With an end to the conflict in sight, he appealed to the bodies of the United Nations system and to intergovernmental organizations to assist his country in the process of reconstruction.

28. Mrs. EDWARDS (Marshall Islands) said that, like their counterparts in other developing countries, the women of the Marshall Islands lacked opportunities in the fields of education and employment and were underrepresented in local and national politics, though slow but positive gains were being made. Her Government recognized that the advancement of women must be a central element of all development strategies. Education was crucial, enabling women both to gain access to employment and to manage more efficiently the fruits of their efforts, in the interest of family, community and national development.

29. Her Government was committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. Programmes had already been initiated in the fields of vocational training and family planning, while women and girls in the outer islands were being helped to market the goods they produced overseas and to expand their traditional skills through the application of environmentally sound technology.

30. Many women and girls in the Marshall Islands had been exposed to radiation, and an increasing number were dying of cancer. She appealed to the international community to recognize their plight and to provide the technical assistance her country needed to deal with the problem of contamination. She welcomed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and applauded those countries which had ratified it. Only when the interrelationship between disarmament, environment, health and human rights was universally recognized would the peoples of the world be assured of a safe future.

31. Ms. ESHMAMBETOYA (Kyrgyzstan) said that, in accordance with the commitments it had made at the Beijing Conference, her Government had created a State commission on women and the family which would formulate a national strategy for the advancement of women, taking the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action as its base. The Commission was cooperating actively with a number of United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations.

32. Her Government recognized the importance of enhancing women's participation in political life. Nearly one fifth of government ministers were women, significantly higher than the global average, and her Government aimed to ensure that by the year 2000 40 per cent of decision-making posts were occupied by women.

33. Unemployment among women was the most severe social problem facing Kyrgyzstan. Despite her Government's efforts, women still accounted for almost 60 per cent of the jobless total, with young women being particularly hard hit. In response to the crisis, her Government had launched job-creation schemes and was supporting entrepreneurial activities by women. The high levels of unemployment, together with rising prices and cutbacks in social assistance programmes which had accompanied the transition to a market economy, had led to a drop in the birth rate. Nevertheless, the infant mortality rate remained among the highest in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a regrettable statistic.

34. Discrimination against women often began in childhood, with girls being denied equal access to health care and education. In Kyrgyzstan, young women were already well represented in both secondary and higher education, and her Government had recently launched a programme aimed at ensuring that all girls received secondary schooling. In Kyrgyzstan, 1996 had been declared national women's year. An international women's conference would shortly be held in the capital, Bishkek, to evaluate the achievements of the previous 12 months. As the national women's year was drawing to an end, it was hoped that 1996 would mark the dawn of a new era of equality between men and women.

35. Mr. RI Song Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the advancement of women and social and economic progress went hand in hand and that neither could be achieved without the other. Thus, all efforts to promote women's rights must first address the problems of poverty, disease and illiteracy. The difficulties faced by women in the developing nations were especially acute and would be overcome only when those countries enjoyed equal access to the global market.

36. At the national level, Governments must pass equal-opportunity legislation and create the social conditions necessary to enable women to contribute fully to all areas of life. The campaign for women's emancipation had been an integral part of his country's struggle for independence. The first equal-opportunity laws had been enacted in 1946. Today, women continued to play an active role in politics. Some 20 per cent of the deputies of the Supreme People's Assembly were women. The socialist system was especially conducive to the advancement of women. Universal child care for pre-school children, entirely funded by the State, meant that women were free to pursue independent lives.

37. The issue of the thousands of "comfort women" abused by Japanese soldiers during the Second World War had yet to be satisfactorily addressed. He urged the Japanese Government to accept responsibility for that atrocity and to provide adequate compensation for the victims.

38. Mr. TURNQUEST (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the 13 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) expressed concern that funding for women's programmes had increased only slightly at the national and international levels and, in some instances, had actually decreased. Innovative ways to provide resources for programmes or to maintain current levels of funding should be sought.

39. Within the framework of follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, additional steps must be taken to enhance the capacities of the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat. The freeze on recruitment should not be used as an excuse for inaction. CARICOM welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and looked forward to learning about the outcome of its recent meetings. The Third Committee should address lacunae and ensure that there was no duplication in implementing the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001.

40. At the national level, greater efforts must be made to formulate national action plans, as recommended by the Beijing Conference, and to submit them in a timely manner to the Secretariat. The model plan which had been formulated at the recent subregional conference of senior governmental experts, held in Bucharest, could be useful in that connection.

41. CARICOM welcomed the participation of non-governmental organizations in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference through the holding of dialogues and workshops and active participation in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. It also welcomed the ongoing dialogue between member States and non-governmental organizations on how the participation of the latter could be made even more effective.

42. In October 1995, the Caribbean Community had held a meeting to follow up the Beijing Conference and formulated a subregional plan of action. Priorities in that plan included poverty reduction and the economic empowerment of women; women's health; the prevention of violence against women; the political empowerment of women; disaster prevention and preparedness; and the strengthening of national machinery. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had been disseminated widely in government agencies of the Caribbean countries and the community at large. The CARICOM Governments had also sponsored workshops and seminars.

43. Senior cabinet ministers and national entities for women's affairs were responsible for women's issues. Caribbean women had free access to high-level posts in both the public and private sectors. The CARICOM countries were grateful to the secretariats of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Caribbean Development Cooperation Committee (CDCC), UNIFEM, the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth and CARICOM for supporting their follow-up activities.

44. CARICOM hailed the achievement of an overall rate of 35.2 per cent in posts subject to geographical distribution in the Secretariat. Greater efforts must

be made, however, in order to attain the target of a 25 per cent participation rate of women at the decision-making level and the overall target of 50 per cent. As they had already indicated during the past two sessions of the General Assembly, the CARICOM countries were concerned about the low level of representation of CARICOM women in the Secretariat. They hoped that that situation would be remedied and that CARICOM women already in the Secretariat would be promoted to senior-level posts.

45. CARICOM strongly supported the holding of an additional session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1997 in order to deal with the backlog of periodic reports. Resources should be provided for a session of the open-ended in-session working group on the optional protocol to be convened in parallel with the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. In that connection, the Chairman of the Third Committee might wish to transmit a letter to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, conveying the Third Committee's strong desire that those meetings should take place. It was not too early to begin organizing discussions, workshops and seminars, at both the national and international levels, in preparation for the deliberations of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1997.

46. Ms. AL-AWADI (Kuwait) said that the Kuwaiti Constitution guaranteed women the right to work and to do the work of their choice. In 1996, women represented nearly 30 per cent of the workforce. However, the role of women in development and in serving society was not restricted to paid employment, but included social and voluntary services.

47. The Constitution affirmed the equality of men and women with regard to rights and responsibilities, and provided women with legal guarantees of their right to education and work. It was, however, left up to local legislative bodies to make arrangements appropriate to prevailing circumstances. Since the mid-1970s, development plans had stressed the active role of women in development and their participation in the workforce in all social and economic spheres. The social and economic development plan for the years 1995-1996 to 1999-2000 had contained a number of social development policies which stressed that caring for the family was the responsibility of both parents, with special emphasis on the importance of the role played by women as mothers.

48. During the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, Kuwaiti women had been subjected to a number of abuses, which had caused psychological and social problems. These problems had persisted after liberation for women whose husbands had either been killed or who continued to be detained in Iraqi prisons, and the situation was exacerbated by Iraqi procrastination.

49. Mr. AL-DOSARI (Bahrain) said that his country believed that the participation of women in all aspects of social life, in accordance with the Islamic Shariah as it related to the dignity and welfare of women, was basic to the achievement of development. The elimination of poverty and backwardness and the achievement of economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice required the participation of women in the overall development process.

50. Bahrain had endeavoured to achieve such participation by means of its long- and short-term plans in the fields of education, health, labour, social affairs, housing, information, development and industry. The active role of women in social and economic development activities and projects over the past three decades had increased greatly. There had been close cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors in preparing, financing and participating in development, welfare and information projects.

51. Efforts had been made to promote the participation of women at all levels, in accordance with the principles of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination, in the various educational, economic and social fields. In the private sector, women had reached executive and managerial positions in some banks and large corporations, and there were many commercial enterprises in which women participated as investors or managers.

52. With a view to combating poverty, programmes had been drawn up to enhance the skills of women, and appropriate job opportunities had been created by projects in such fields as dressmaking and handicrafts. Programmes in nutritional and health education had been elaborated, social assistance had been provided and there had been a project to develop the capacities of women leaders to act as a link between social service of clients and local authorities. The Bahrain Training Institute trained girls for work in commercial and industrial establishments, and there were many other such government programmes. The activities of non-governmental organizations had included a project for the production of paper from palm fronds, a documentation and information centre for women, a school for disabled children, a nursery for blind children, a hearing and speech development centre and research on questions concerning women and children.

53. In keeping with world developments and in order to maintain the progress made by women, the State had enacted legislation to safeguard the rights of both genders in all fields. Legislation protected working women, citizens and expatriates alike, particularly with regard to maternity, wages, conditions of service and working conditions, and, in accordance with the Islamic Shariah, it also protected them against all forms of violence.

54. Bahrain was convinced that the guarantees provided by national laws for the protection of women was a matter that pertained to the exercise of State sovereignty. It therefore hoped that the General Assembly would reach consensus on the question of the protection of working women in a manner that was compatible with the principle of State sovereignty as embodied in the Charter.

55. Mr. KHRYSKOV (Russian Federation) said that the follow-up process to the Fourth World Conference on Women should build on the balanced approach evident at that forum, taking into account the interests of all groups of countries, including States with economies in transition. The successful implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action and of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 would depend upon cooperation between the various agencies of the United Nations system and member States. He hoped that the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality would prove to be an effective and dynamic coordination mechanism. The Secretary-General's report on the advancement of women through and in the

programmes of the United Nations system (A/51/180) contained a number of valuable proposals on the implementation of the Platform for Action which should be put into practice.

56. Of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action, 4 were of particular relevance to the Russian Federation. His Government had recently adopted a conceptual framework on the advancement of women outlining its strategies in those key areas, namely, the promotion of women to decision-making positions; equality in the labour market; the improvement of women's health care; and the prevention of violence against women. Subsequently, on the basis of the policy statement, his Government had adopted a national plan of action for the advancement of women and the enhancement of their role in society by the year 2000. An interdepartmental commission had been created to supervise implementation of the plan of action. The President of the Russian Federation had recently signed a decree aimed at increasing women's representation in the federal Government and in decision-making bodies throughout the Russian Federation.

57. The Commission on the Status of Women would play a major role in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference. He had noted with satisfaction the Commission's decision to review its working methods and looked forward to assisting the officers of the Commission and the Division for the Advancement of Women with the preparations for the Commission's forty-first session. The Working Group of the Commission established to consider the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must continue its deliberations. In his view, an optional protocol would be an effective means of preventing discrimination against women and ensuring de facto equality. His delegation had welcomed the recognition by the Commission at its fortieth session in section V (Regional dimension) of draft resolution II (follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women) of the specific difficulties faced by different regions in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. That question had been the subject of a recent subregional meeting of experts from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the first such event to be organized under the auspices of the United Nations. He welcomed such evidence of the international community's concern at the special problems faced by women in countries with economies in transition.

58. Mr. AL-MUALLA (United Arab Emirates) said that the international community had in recent years set about elaborating plans for the advancement of women that were in keeping with contemporary aspirations for global progress towards societies in which women and men played complementary and active roles in meeting the needs of national, regional and international development.

59. Despite the special importance accorded to women's issues by the United Nations over the past two decades, the efforts made had yet to bring about the qualitative change in the situation of women that had been desired, particularly in those developing countries where women were most affected by poverty, illiteracy, violence and ethnic and regional conflict.

60. Lack of sufficient resources and economic instability had prevented the developing countries from implementing systematic national plans for the

education and training of women. The international community was therefore urged to provide greater assistance to those countries in order to help them to offer equal opportunities to men and women to participate in the endeavour to eliminate poverty and achieve overall development. That would require strengthening the productive capacity of women and enabling them to have access to capital, technical assistance, training and other requirements for sustainable development.

61. The outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women had met the desire of the international community for a comprehensive programme of collective international action to change the prevailing situation of women in many parts of the world while taking account of the religious concepts and principles and the spiritual values that played a major role in the lives of peoples and in ensuring their stability.

62. Non-governmental organizations had played a prominent role in examining the situation of women and calling for the enactment of legislation and the establishment of mechanisms to promote the advancement of women at the national, regional and international levels.

63. The United Arab Emirates, acting in accordance with the principles of a Constitution that was derived from Islamic law, with its own traditions and with its Arab Islamic civilization, had always promoted equality between men and women, particularly in such matters as legal capacity, the ownership and management of property, choice of occupation and access to social services. It had enacted legislation, in the framework of labour and social security laws, that guaranteed women's constitutional rights, encouraged their participation in decision-making positions in federal institutions and conferred benefits on them in accordance with their work situation and child-care needs. Other legislation had guaranteed the rights of foreign women working in the country.

64. The commitment of the United Arab Emirates to promoting the role of women in development had been reflected in rates of female participation in the workforce, which had risen from 5.3 per cent in 1980 to 16.3 per cent in 1990. That trend had continued during the 1990s, and there had also been an increase in the numbers of women entering non-traditional occupations. In the light of the prominent role played by women in the household, the State had greatly increased the number of maternal and child health-care centres, kindergartens, girls' clubs, social development centres and women's health centres. It intended to formulate new literacy programmes for women and to encourage technical and vocational training for women and the revival of handicrafts, particularly in rural areas. The State had also used the mass media to educate women in child care and household matters and to enhance their role in protecting the environment and combating social problems.

65. The State had supported national women's organizations through the General Union of Women, which had assumed responsibility for addressing various women's issues and for implementing social and cultural activities and had given women an opportunity to participate in relevant regional and international activities.

66. In order to benefit from the significant role women could play in collective international efforts, the United Nations and its specialized

agencies and other international institutions must reform their existing procedures and develop programmes and activities to promote women's participation in decision-making and in the elaboration and implementation of global strategies.

67. Mrs. ILLO (Niger) said that, in the Niger and all other African countries, women contributed to economic, social and cultural development, particularly in the rural areas, where they often worked an average of 17 hours a day. The value of their work was not recognized, however, and despite many promises by politicians, the situation of women in the Niger had not improved. That was due to a number of factors, including sociological attitudes which perpetuated the domination of women; illiteracy among women (91 per cent of women were illiterate); the fact that women's roles, needs and responsibilities were not seriously taken into account in economic and social development policies; the priority accorded to technical solutions to women's problems; and the marginalization of women in political bodies, even though women represented a vast proportion of the electorate. In 1995, 5 out of 83 deputies and 4 out of 28 ministers had been women. Currently, only 4 out of 25 Government ministers were women.

68. In the context of a new democracy, the women of the Niger were promoting the elaboration and implementation of a national policy for the advancement of women. A triennial plan of action had been drafted, which took into account the recommendations of the Beijing Declaration. It had 13 objectives, including better education for women. Moreover, taking women into account in the democratic process would be a boon to national economic, social and cultural development as a whole. Implementation of the action plan was at a standstill, however, owing to the unprecedented financial crisis in the Niger. Her delegation was therefore concerned that the Organization's resources for development activities had been reduced.

69. She expressed her delegation's full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to follow up the Beijing Platform for Action. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of UNIFEM in the preparation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and hoped that it would redouble its efforts to promote the political and economic development of African women. She expressed appreciation for the work of women's associations and non-governmental organizations in the Niger to improve the living conditions of the people, particularly women. For example, non-governmental organizations had helped to establish a small school in a village outside Niamey in order to spare young children from having to walk long distances to school.

70. Ms. GRAYSON (World Bank) referred to General Assembly resolution 50/227 (Section VIII) and the debate of the Economic and Social Council calling for a strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. In response to those appeals, the World Bank would sponsor an Open Forum in November with the Manager of its Gender Analysis and Policy Group.

71. The previous week, the World Bank had participated in the first meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. It chaired the Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, one of the

three inter-agency task forces established by ACC to follow up the recommendations of the global conferences. As the advancement of women was an integral part of the development process, the work of the Task Force took into account the Beijing Conference and the gender perspective.

72. The Poverty and Gender Monitoring Unit of the World Bank reviewed all newly approved Bank projects in order to determine whether they included special components to benefit women or addressed gender issues directly. It was estimated that in the 1995 fiscal year, 28 per cent of World Bank lending operations had included gender-specific actions and an additional 9 per cent had discussed gender issues. Gender analysis was also becoming an integral part of the design of Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) prepared periodically for all borrower countries.

73. The resident missions of the World Bank in Africa held regular consultative meetings with non-governmental organizations in order to involve them in national policy-making. Coordinators of non-governmental organizations had been appointed to all resident missions in Latin America. A similar process had been launched in Asia. In Europe and Central Asia, the Bank cooperated with women's groups active in the areas of environment, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, and the definition of social safety net programmes.

74. The percentage of World Bank lending for population, health and nutrition and education had increased from 1.4 per cent to 5.3 per cent between 1985 and 1995. The number of projects it financed in that field had risen from 8 in fiscal year 1985 to 26 in fiscal year 1995. Over the same period, education lending had increased from 6.4 per cent to 9.9 per cent of total Bank lending. Twenty-seven education projects had been financed in fiscal year 1995.

75. Increasing attention had been focused on the specific health and education needs of women and girls. The World Bank's cash contribution of US$ 30 million to the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest had helped to establish a funding facility for eligible micro-finance institutions. Designed mainly for countries with a per capita income below US$ 800, the programme would help to strengthen the capacity of financial service institutions working with the poorest sectors of society, consisting mainly of women. Women entrepreneurs were therefore expected to be the main beneficiaries of the programme.

76. At the World Bank, there were three women Vice-Presidents, and women held other high-level appointments; the percentage of women in managerial and higher professional posts had also increased substantially. As women had been under-represented at the Bank in 1995, a Staffing Officer had been appointed to develop networks for external recruitment. A Senior Adviser on women's issues, appointed in 1992, organized meetings at which women could exchange ideas and information. Arrangements to help women balance their family and professional lives, including flex-time, were also available.

77. Ms. ELIAS (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Executive Board of UNICEF had decided to focus on girls' education; adolescent girls' and women's health; and children's and women's rights in its follow-up activities to the Beijing Conference. The UNICEF Framework of Action for Girls' Education sought to reduce gender disparities in education through activities at the

global and national levels. At the national level, UNICEF helped to ensure that girls' education was integrated in the larger education system and that diversified approaches, including non-formal and distance education were taken. UNICEF was coordinating donor and national activities for girls' education in 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

78. In the area of health, UNICEF sought to increase girls' and women's access to information and to reduce maternal mortality rates. Those themes had been defined as priorities in the Latin American and Caribbean region. UNICEF and the Planning Institute of Jamaica were currently evaluating programmes on teenage pregnancy, skills training and the development of girls' self-esteem. UNICEF was addressing female genital mutilation as both a women's health issue and a violation of their rights. Plans for the elimination of genital mutilation were being implemented multilaterally in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan.

79. She referred to a number of activities designed to enhance the rights of children and women. In Guyana, alliances had been formed to increase awareness of violence against women. In addition, women's and children's organizations were seeking to establish linkages between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). That complementarity between the Convention and CEDAW was also being promoted by the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa. Under the project, women's and children's rights would be incorporated in law school curricula in five countries. At the global level, consultations between members of both the Committee on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW would be held in Egypt in November.

80. UNICEF had participated in the recent World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm. In her address to the Congress, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, had emphasized that girls were the chief victims of sexual exploitation of children, owing to girls' and women's low status in society. UNICEF concurred with the recommendation of a recent United Nations study on the impact of armed conflict on children that gender-based violence should be seen as an abuse that targeted women and girls for political and strategic reasons and as a crime against the physical integrity and human dignity of the individual. It also agreed that priority should be accorded to the special needs of adolescent girls, many of whom were heads of households.

81. In early 1996, the Executive Board had adopted a mission statement reaffirming the Fund's commitment to the advancement of women by promoting the equal rights of women and girls in its country programmes and supporting their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities. Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was an integral part of the UNICEF objectives for sustainable human development. In mainstreaming a gender perspective in its policies and programmes, UNICEF followed the empowerment and life-cycle perspective upheld in the Platform for Action and established a linkage between women's and children's rights in the context of the themes of equality, development and peace.

82. Mr. JESSEN-PETERSEN (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that, in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, UNHCR was focusing its efforts on violence against women, women and armed conflict and women's rights. In February 1996, UNHCR had organized a symposium on gender-based violence and persecution, held in Geneva, which had encouraged the development of guidelines to assist countries granting asylum to female victims of gender-based persecution, including female genital mutilation. Thus far, Australia, Canada and the United States of America had drafted guidelines. In addition, a rights awareness training manual for refugee women was being distributed to UNHCR field offices to prevent sexual violence. In the past year, the Office had also issued guidelines on prevention and responses to sexual violence against refugees.

83. UNHCR was cooperating with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the area of refugee women's reproductive health. In that connection, it had appointed a reproductive health officer to coordinate activities.

84. In the past five years, UNHCR had dealt with violence on a massive scale in the former Yugoslavia and in the Great Lakes region of Africa. In partnership with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, it had set up community structures for trauma counselling, health and reproductive health care, psycho-social support and community care and rehabilitation for the survivors of violence. It was also promoting small-scale income-generating activities in reintegration programmes for refugee, displaced and returning women. A special Bosnian Women's Initiative Fund had been set up for Bosnian displaced women. The Fund provided assistance for micro-credit schemes, micro-enterprise development, training, and child and elderly care for women engaged in economic activities. Bosnian women and their associations had been consulted and had identified a number of areas of critical concern. They had also informed the Office of a rise in the incidence of domestic violence hitherto unknown in Bosnia.

85. Based on the model in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR was establishing services for women survivors of the genocide in Rwanda. The programme would benefit unaccompanied women and survivors of genocide, particularly young girls and women. It already provided assistance for women's involvement in socio-economic activities, such as skills training for income-generation in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, food processing and business management. It also provided counselling for women and girls with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). The broader aspects of the programme in Rwanda included legal education and training on rights awareness; family reunification; shelter for the homeless; psycho-social support; and vocational training and education. A total of 57 women's associations had been assisted with small grants and loans through a sub-agreement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. UNHCR hoped to establish a revolving loan programme in 1997. Unfortunately, limited resources had made it impossible for UNHCR to assist all the women in the region, who accounted for 70 per cent of the population. Concerned that the most recent tragic developments would further aggravate the plight of refugee women and children, the High Commissioner had appealed to the combatants to respect the life of all innocent victims, particularly women and children.

86. At the first meeting of the ACC Inter Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, held the week before, UNHCR had offered to coordinate the preparation of a discussion on women in the peace process, conflict resolution and violence against women. As women and children comprised the vast majority of the refugee population, women must be involved in the initial stages of camp set up and management; they must become part of the leadership and management structures at refugee sites.

87. A UNHCR Reference Group on Refugee Women, chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner, was responsible for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Thus far, it had considered the participation of refugee women at all levels of food management and distribution in refugee camps. The Reference Group would also provide gender analysis training to all UNHCR professional staff and the Office's implementing partners. Thus far, 101 training workshops had been conducted in 46 countries. In the near future, the programme would include a gender awareness planning component and an empowerment framework for refugees, designed to avoid creating a dependency syndrome which treated refugees as passive beneficiaries. UNHCR staff and operational partners would also be expected to comply with the Policy and Guidelines on Refugee Women by mainstreaming gender concerns into their operations.

88. The High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata, had introduced special measures in order to increase the number of women in the Office to the target of 35 per cent established by the General Assembly. As a result, the number of women had increased from 32 per cent as of November 1995 to 37.1 per cent as of September 1996. Increasingly, female staff members with appropriate qualifications were being deployed in the field where refugee women were at risk.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.